THE

HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS

OF

INDEPENDENCY

IN ENGLAND,

SINCE THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION;

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION, CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY IN THE AGE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE OF THE CHURCH INTO ANTICHRISTIAN ERROR, UNTIL THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION.

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CHAPTER I.

PROGRESS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM BEFORE THE REVIVAL OF INDEPENDENCY.

THERE are many circumstances in the history of Independency in England which lend it a peculiar interest, apart from the sacredness of those associations which invest a divine cause, and the prophetic lustre reflected on the early stages of a career destined to triumph. The onward progress, through a long succession of years, of principles opposed to predominant political and ecclesiastical systems, must necessarily be marked by many striking incidents and many stirring events. The character of the men who advocated those principles, the conflicts and sufferings they endured, the noble stand they were enabled to make for freedom, the proud achievements whose results they transmitted to their successors in the hallowed cause of liberty, and the influence they exerted upon the age in which they lived,—are points of moment to every thoughtful and philosophic mind.

Not less interesting is the fact, which gradually discloses itself, of principle prevailing over prejudice and power. While ordinary history is occupied with a succession of pageants that move along with little apparent connexion, like the rapidly shifted scenery of the stage; or at most with a succession of political

and ecclesiastical catastrophies in which there is little of order or interesting sequence; our history traces the continuous transmission of well-defined and identical principles from generation to generation. The advocate may die but the principles remain. Time only mellows them. New advocates appear, in each successive period, only in greater number than before. Changes transpire in every department of human action; but these newly discovered truths maintain a divine consistency, and acquire augmented force, amidst all the fluctuating events of the political and religious world. Popery and protestantism pass through their Protean forms, according as the expedient of the day may determine; but Independency continues, as in the beginning, the perfect, unalterable system to which inspired apostles lent their finishing hand.

What renders the steady advancement of Independency in England unique, is the circumstance that it excludes from its service the appliances by which other systems are usually advanced. Refusing on principle the aid of secular power, and the patronage of civil sanction, the wonder is that it should have prolonged its existence through any extensive period. It has generally been deemed essential to the church's perpetuity, and much more to its universal extension, that it should win over to its side the influential and the powerful, the magistrate and the ruler; and in order to this it has been thought fitting, that more or less of hierarchical subordination should be assumed by the church itself, in order to its proper management as a whole, confederate with and dependant upon the state. Our history, however, completely reverses the conditions

judged essential to perpetuity and progress. Independency not only repudiates all connexion with the civil power, but excludes every approximation to hierarchical distinctions; dividing rather than uniting the church as to what is authoritative, by constituting every local congregation a self-governing republic, and expressly forbidding any union between the several religious communities which, by amalgamating their interests, may undermine their individual independence. Thus the system is shorn of all worldly strength. It is a negation upon court smiles and regal favours. It will not be aided and abetted by the world in the world's way. It repeats the disclaimer of its author, "my kingdom is not of this world." It refuses to be petted, patronized, and spoiled. And yet, it is the only consistent and really permanent system of all that strive for preeminence. Popery is everlasting change. Protestantism varies with every new political dynasty. Episcopacy suffers diminution or accession of glory with every change affecting a territorial establishment. Presbytery depends upon numbers for the multiplication of its synodical arrangements, and upon the state of parties for the harmony or discordancy of its movements. Independency alone has persistance amidst all the changes of dynasty, party, and territorial distribution; dependant on none of these things, but only on the existence of "the faithful" whether few or many. As a system, it is as perfect in adversity as in prosperity; as much so amidst the newly-gathered converts on a missionary station where heathenism frowns around, as amidst the smiles and sympathies of associated churches in a country partially or wholly evangelized; as much so in "an upper

room" at Jerusalem, when the number of the names of the disciples is about "an hundred and twenty," as in a more advanced period when whole regions yield their converts to the cause of the Redeemer and the churches are multiplied.

There is another circumstance in the history of Independency which renders it a noble study for the patriot and philanthropist, the liberal statesman and the lover of freedom. This is to be found in its modifying influence over opposing systems, whether political or ecclesiastical. Hume has made honourable mention of this circumstance in reference to its most palpable exhibition, perhaps because it could not be avoided. His observation has directed him to notice the liberty won for mankind by the most practical of all kinds of advocacy, namely, suffering, on the part of the Independents during the dynasty of the Stuarts. A wider observation will lead to the recognition of a more general truth. Not only did the Independents fulfil their share of suffering service, side by side with the Nonconformists and Puritans; but their principles boldly espoused as distinctive and fixed principles, while all other systems were based more or less upon expediency or assumption, gradually effected the most important changes in the spirit and temper of the rest. Popery and protestantism, episcopacy and presbytery, mere nonconformity and puritanism, are compatible with almost any assignable amount of that pernicious element which leads, as opportunity serves, and interest or policy moves, to persecution and domination; and if at any time innocent of the charge of persecution and intolerance, owe it rather to the state of the times, than to anything in their own nature which excludes

their adherents from these vices. The oppressed catholics of Ireland might, in a distant age, have been the retainers of Simon de Montfort, in his war of extermination against the Albigenses,—without any change of principles. The protestantism of Germany in the fifteenth century, which assumed a defensive attitude against the oppressions of popery, becomes aggressive and persecuting in the next century, in a neighbouring country, although retaining its protestant name. The episcopalianism of Cranmer, which reaps an unmerited glory from his martyrdom in the age of Mary, was no restraint upon his intolerance in the reign of Henry the Eighth and Edward the Sixth. The presbyterianism of the Free Church of Scotland is not inconsistent with the advocacy of a principle which, in the days of Charles the First, sought to establish an organized oppression as intolerant as that of popery itself. But Independency has not only ever been the same from the period of its revival to the present, whether frowned upon or favoured, whether suffering or in the ascendancy; more than this, it has exerted an influence upon these systems, which it is impossible to estimate too highly. A fixedly liberal system itself, it has tended to liberalize other systems not essentially liberal. Its advancement has ever had more or less of disintegrating power on systems which would otherwise have preserved an immoveable aspect of confederated and well-compacted despotism. Where it has not assimilated to itself, it has softened and subdued. Papists, episcopalians, presbyterians, have avowedly admitted into their respective systems as much of its liberal element as is compatible with their peculiar organizations; and mere statesmen and

politicians have learned some of their most valuable lessons in the science of liberty and liberal advancement from the pages of its history. Indeed, it would be difficult to over-estimate the amount of obligation under which it has laid the world by virtue of the ameliorating influences it has exerted in successive periods of modern history, on the ecclesiastical and political institutions of our country.

Important, however, as are these circumstances in reference to the past, they do not constitute the chief interest of our subject. That is derived from the prospective spread of Independency as a Divine system instituted in order to an universal diffusion, and an ultimate ascendancy. Truth has always waited for man to come round to its side. Christianity has ever been patient for its own triumphs. The history of the past progress of Independency is but a portion of an ever accumulating whole. The narrow stream widens as it flows, and is destined to bear the commerce of the world. The prophetic parable of the grain of mustard seed is still only in part accomplished; the sowing of that grain, and its germination heretofore, are important, mainly on account of our faith in respect to the future.

To the philosophic mind, enlightened by revelation, the future advancement of Independency is fraught with ever growing interest—akin to that with which the Christian in his more generalized view of the future, contemplates the universal extension of Messiah's kingdom. The past history of Christianity is fraught with memorable events; but its chief glory is, that it forms part of a more glorious whole. The ages are radiant with glory because of their anticipated consummation. The truth shall prevail. One element

—the element of liberty—shall not be wanting. That system which apostles instituted, and from which the church early departed, shall be restored to its Divine place in the general triumph. Worldly influence shall cease; hierarchical subordination shall be no more; synodical mechanism shall not usurp the place of consentaneous spontaneity; congregational self-government shall terminate the reign of domination; individual conscience shall be the final arbiter; and *all* shall co-operate freely with the unity of *one*.

The result will be the permanent enjoyment of the highest liberty possible in matters of religion. Individually, socially, politically, man will be free. All the positive good which can be derived from union and association with others, will be reaped by every individual; while from the protection which the system of a prevalent Independency shall throw around him, all the evil so commonly attendant upon union and association will be prevented. The line of a Divine discrimination will be practically drawn between the possible and safe, and the non-possible and dangerous in matters of fellowship and co-operation; and by an universal consent it will be admitted that that particular mode of church organization which though Divinely instituted, was so easily departed from, and so slowly and reluctantly restored to its original place amongst the things of God, is alone expedient, because alone Divine. Such, at least, are the anticipations of those who inherit the principles of Independency, and from such a source do they derive all the interest thrown around the progress of those principles in time past. They watch the slow growth of the heavenly plant with interest and anxiety, on account of the fruit anticipated. As angels bent over

the cradle of Jesus in Bethlehem, although to common observers it was no better than a manger, on account of the destiny of him who innocently slept there; so *they* watch with anxiety every feature of the infant cause in by-gone days, because of an unshaken confidence respecting its future maturity and ultimate glory.

Other systems may have had their uses; and their present and future continuance for a season may be over-ruled for good. But nothing more. It is not for us to judge of principles, or practices, by the results which an over-ruling Providence may have effected through them; but by their natural tendency and character. The Divine prerogative of bringing good out of evil is no pattern for man. The permitted reign of sin and darkness will doubtless be rendered ultimately subservient to some wise purpose. The bondage of Israel in Egypt, though a burden of reproach and infamy against the Pharoahs, became a means of fulfilling the Divine plans in relation to his people. The usurpations of antichrist during so many centuries shall ultimately redound to the glory of the Redeemer and his true church. But all this affects not the question of personal duty respecting what has been appointed and is known to be right. If the institutions of apostolic times are Divine to the exclusion of all others, every conflicting system having its origin in innovation on the basis of a merely human expediency; if those institutions shall in the end universally prevail; it must be the duty of all who thus believe to espouse their interests and advocate their diffusion. To think, feel, act, otherwise is, according to the hypothesis, to adopt evil; and though good may come out of such evil, by

virtue of a Divine over-ruling, that evil must not be done.

The peculiar and exclusive claims of Independency have already been exhibited. It is unnecessary, therefore, to expatiate upon them here. We have seen that a fair interpretation of the New Testament records developes a system of principles in reference to church organization accordant with the genius of the Christian religion, and adapted to the spiritual and social condition of man; a system framed by Divine wisdom for the conservation of freedom and union, liberty and order; a system which admits as much of good arising from the agency of blended sympathies and concerted operations, as is compatible with individual responsibility and voluntary action, while it excludes, if not all, yet the more formidable evils which are fostered and perpetuated more or less by every other system; a system which delegates to the individual conscience absolute supremacy in order that Christ may have the pre-eminence; which encourages union between Christian men and churches on the only safe basis, that of voluntary sympathy and co-operation; which excludes the secular power from all interference with man's spiritual being and well-being; and which thus renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. This system had a practical embodiment, not only during the apostolic age, but for many years after; and the successive steps by which it was undermined, as recorded on the page of history, constitute a strong argument in favour of the primitive origin of the system itself. The departure of the church into antichristian error, like the ebbing of the tide which leaves behind its own high-water mark, is cor-

roborative of the fact of the previous existence of that from which the departure began.

Our object in the following history will be to trace an opposite course to the one already traced in a former volume. There we saw how the fine gold became dim, and dross was substituted and made current for the sterling metal. We have now to show how, after a long period of neglect, the way was prepared for the revival of Independency in England, and to trace the subsequent progress of conviction in relation to that system in successive periods. The causes of that revival will form the subject of another chapter. We propose to commence with a retrospective glance at the progress of freedom in its more palpable exhibitions, previous to the period when our history properly commences. Regarding the system of Independency as the expression of a perfect, because Divinely instituted, liberty in religion, we look back and ask, how much of this Divine element entered into the struggles and conflicts of the past: not simply how much of evangelical or uncorrupted doctrine was held; but how much of approving recognition was given to that Divine system from which the church so early departed into hierarchical error and spiritual domination.

To trace with perfect accuracy the progress of religious freedom in Europe, from any very early period to that of the reformation from popery, would be a difficult task. That progress has never been uniform. The retrograde are so often collateral with the onward processes, that to determine at any period whether progress or departure has been effected would not be easy. The course of liberty, like that of the gospel, is too dependant on unseen

agencies to be traced on the page of history with the continuity of a stream that commences at a fixed source and flows onward to its destined end. Although, looking back from the present period, it would be safe to assert that progress has been made in the cause of truth and freedom on the whole, more must be ascribed to the over-ruling providence of God than to the natural causes by which some minds are wont to account for every thing. Even the Great Reformation of the sixteenth century was more due to the interposition of Divine power than most historians are willing to acknowledge. While it is confessed that many circumstances, to be accounted for from natural causes, conspired to aid in that great achievement; what reader of the history of that era can doubt that there were many crises in which the whole work might have been driven backward, even as in the time of Wickliff and Huss, had not an unseen hand smoothed the way for ultimate success.

It is safer, therefore, and more profitable to trace the workings of principle than of parties in reference to the past, and to delineate the growth of truth in the minds of men rather than the growth of power as confederate with it.

There are traces of witnesses for the truth, in purer forms than were to be found in the early catholic and later Roman-catholic church, in every age of Christianity. But of many of them little is known. The enemy has either destroyed their records, or so falsified them as to render the precise title which they have to our veneration a matter of conjecture rather than certainty. To follow the light of conviction in opposition to the views of a dominant hierarchy, has always been the way to excommunication, and often

to martyrdom; and, from the time of Priscillian* downwards, through many centuries, myriads have perished in consequence of following their own religious faith in opposition to that of the more powerful party. In successive periods we read of heretics and schismatics, to whom the most calumnious epithets are applied, and the most pernicious doctrines ascribed, whose faith was, in all probability, purer than that of the reputed orthodox. The known errors of the catholic, Roman-catholic, and Greek church, are proof that those whom they proscribed and destroyed might be more faithful adherents to a scriptural Christianity than their foes; and the almost general fact, that the imputed heresy has been connected with an appeal to scripture, instead of resting upon the decisions of councils, confirms the position. Amongst these victims of intolerance and spiritual supremacy, were men of independent thought and enlightened as well as conscientious principles, approximating nearly to those of the earliest confessors and martyrs of the primitive church. It is barely possible for men to be willing martyrs for private opinions not derived from the Divine word. But such instances are always rare, and originate in a very peculiar temperament. The religious conviction that is not based upon a standard conceived to be infallible, seldom has in it the self-sustaining energy requisite to steadfastness of opposition amidst overwhelming numbers, and in the prospect of martyrdom. On this account, as well as from the fact, so generally apparent, that the so-called heterodox and heretic of successive periods referred to scripture or primitive tradition in

* The first sufferer for *heresy*, so called, A.D. 384, at Treves.

the maintenance of their views, there is reason to believe that in the day of the reversal of iniquitous human judgments the orthodox and the heterodox of history will very generally have to change places, and that in this sense many of the first will be last, and many of the last first.

The most extensive body of Christian men with the story of whose principles and wrongs the page of history is occupied previous to the Reformation, is that which has been known under the name of the Vaudois, Waldenses, and Albigenses.* The documents pertaining to their early history have perished, and their names do not meet us in any records farther back than the twelfth century. There is reason, however, to believe that their origin may be traced to the fourth century, the period of divergence from the catholic church, consequent upon its worldly establishment by Constantine. One of their enemies † of the thirteenth century makes it a ground of accusation against them, that they could refer to the antiquity of their system of doctrine and organization, and specifi-

* Besides Mosheim, Milner, and Waddington, I would refer the reader to "The Vaudois: comprising observations made during a tour to the Valleys of Piedmont, in the summer of 1844; together with remarks, introductory and interspersed, respecting the origin, history, and present condition of that interesting people; by E. Henderson, D.D.;"—for accurate information respecting the early history of the Vaudois, and their relation to the Waldenses. See also the "History of the Crusades against the Albigenses in the Thirteenth Century, from the French of Sismondi;" Introductory Essay by W. Youngman.

† Reimer, or Reiner, a monk of Placentia, who according to Venema (Hist. Ecc. t. vi. p. 116) was first a leader amongst the Waldenses, and afterwards a deserter and bitter foe. Reinier became at last inquisitor-general.

cally mentions the time of Sylvester I., who was bishop of Rome at the time of the Council of Nice, in the early part of the fourth century, as the era to which they themselves traced their primitive dissent. A later witness speaks of them as asserting an apostolic origin;* which they might easily do, on the supposition that their ancestors of the fourth century traced their spiritual lineage back to apostolic times. We have seen, however, that before the fourth century the church had generally departed from the apostolic institutions, having admitted a distinction between bishops and presbyters not warranted by the practice of the primitive churches; and having come under the operation of synodical influence, in consequence of following the model of the political institutions of the Greeks, instead of adhering to the model of church organization of the first age.† From what we know of the presbyterial discipline of the Waldenses in every period of their history down to the present time, we are inclined to think that the testimony of Reinier is true, and that they are a branch from the parent stem of the church as it existed in the fourth century. While the catholic church was extending and consolidating its hierarchical power, and the Roman bishopric was seeking to aggrandize itself by every species of sinful alliance and spiritual pretension, the more simple Christians of Gaul were spreading the gospel from city to city, until they became a numerous and influential body. From time to time they were joined by those Italian exiles who

* A manuscript obtained by Morland, dated A.D. 1587.

† See the Introduction to the present work, vol. i. book ii. chap. iii., "On the Second Post-Apostolic Age, or the Age of Innovation."

fled the scene of Roman domination that they might breathe a purer atmosphere of liberty in the valleys of Piedmont and the farther regions of the West. Thus a body of Christians, originating in two different quarters, came more or less nearly into connexion with one another, although preserving in some respects their distinctive peculiarities. The Vaudois took their name from the *Vaux* or valleys where they settled down as inhabitants; and the Waldenses, from the *Wald* or forest regions of France and Germany. In many respects identical with these, were the Albigenses, named after Albigesium, a province of Narbonnese Gaul, the chief city of which was called Albi. Related to all three were many other Christian sects, bearing various names according to the districts in which they prevailed, the leaders they followed, or some peculiarities by which they were distinguished.* Amongst so many religious sects, existing through various periods, it is to be expected that some variety of doctrine and practice should prevail; neither is it needful to vindicate all of them from the charges brought against them in successive centuries by their Roman-catholic persecutors. It is quite possible that *some* may have been guilty of false doctrines and extravagant practices, and yet that in general these martyrs and confessors were a worthy as well as very numerous body of Christian

* Such as Leonistæ, or poor men of Lyons; Sabbatatorum, from the wooden shoes, or *sabots*, they were accustomed to wear; Patarini, from their sufferings; Turpelini, or Turelupini, from Turelupin, whose children perished miserably, and whose wretchedness was thought to resemble that of the Christians in Flanders and Artois; Picards, Lombards, Bohemians, Bulgarians, etc., from the countries inhabited.

men,* adhering to a more primitive faith and worship than was observed by any professed Christians of their day.

To narrate, however briefly, the persecutions they endured, and the exterminating wars which the Romish church waged against them in different periods and countries, would be foreign to our purpose. Suffice it to say, that the number of those who perished in consequence of refusing to submit to spiritual usurpation amounted on the whole to some millions; and that in their history we read the fulfilment of the apocalyptic prophecy respecting the Babylonian woman "drunk with the blood of the saints." It more nearly concerns us to ascertain the amount of religious freedom asserted and acted upon by the parties we have named; and how far it is probable that the cause of religious freedom would have been advanced in the world, if they had been successful in procuring an actual ascendency for their views. We cannot forget that, in many instances, the persecuted of one age have become the persecuting party of another. It is important, therefore, to ascertain whether our sympathies are to be engaged with the principles or merely with the unhappy position of these hereditary sufferers.

Whatever differences may have existed in refe-

* Reinier testifies that in all the cities of Lombardy, and in Provençe, and in other kingdoms and nations, there were more schools of heretics than of accredited theologians, and more auditors. The author of the Belgian Chronicle says, "the error of the Albigenses prevailed to that degree that it had infested as much as a thousand cities, and if it had not been repressed by the swords of the faithful, I think it would have corrupted the whole of Europe." Alas! that *such* a process of corruption should have been hindered.

rence to the principles of church organization held by the Vaudois and those with whom we have associated their name, there was much in their conduct worthy of the warmest approval. In general, they were free from the charge which weighs so heavily on the persecutor. They were willing, in most instances, to confer on others the liberty they sought for themselves. They not only deprecated the corrupt and superstitious practices of the church of Rome, but denied its authority to impose upon them its views of faith and discipline. And although they leaned too much to traditional views respecting church association and government, it was a part of their creed to appeal to the Word of God as the final authority in religion.* We have already intimated our belief that, as an historic community their origin may be traced to the fourth century; and their ecclesiastical principles reaching down to the present day, combined with their own avowal of the fact in the time of Reinier, corroborate the truth of the conviction. It could not, therefore, be asserted of them that they attained to a primitive form of church organization fitted to develop that amount of liberty in connection with order and union which Christ intended to be enjoyed in the exercise of his religion.† If their circumstances had been different, there was nothing in their principles to prevent them from

* Reinier says, "I have heard and seen a certain unlearned rustic, who recited the Book of Job, word by word, and many who perfectly knew the New Testament."

† See "The Vaudois" referred to before, chap. xiii., and Appendix containing the Confession of Faith, published by the Vaudois churches of Piedmont in 1655.

manifesting more or less of the spirit of domination. Indeed, their very system of synodical authority implies as much; and now and then we have more than intimations of the fact that the full liberty of Christ's free men was not enjoyed in their midst. While Claude, of Turin, in the ninth century exerted his extensive influence most beneficially in resisting the aggressions of Rome, it is evident that that very influence was derived from a false position of prelatical assumption. Neither are we sure, that while espousing the cause of orthodoxy and of a comparatively spiritual worship, he did not at the same time exercise a spiritual domination over his own diocese. In like manner Arnold, of Brescia, whilst seeking to separate the civil from the ecclesiastical power, left undetermined those principles by which the latter might be exercised with safety. In many of the valleys of Piedmont, as well as in France and Bohemia, not only was a moderately hierarchical and synodical power exhibited, which trespassed upon the rights of individual conscience and congregational self-government, but the citizen was too much blended with the Christian, and the municipal with the ecclesiastical. Taking, therefore, a generalized view of the progress of religious freedom amongst the sects now under consideration, we are compelled to conclude that it was, in some important respects, partial. In so far as it was connected with an appeal to Scripture as the ultimate authority in religion, it was hopeful. This *might* become the path to ecclesiastical perfection. But this alone was not sufficient. In later periods, the cry of "the Bible—the Bible alone!" has been heard in the camp of those who resisted the

aggressions of Romish power and pretension; and yet such a cry has not been deemed inconsistent with the employment of civil authority to enforce certain systematized views of the truth contained in that Bible. While, therefore, viewing the history of this people as a whole, we are prepared to admit their innocence of any very grave acts of persecution, we cannot forget how, in some seasons of prosperity, they used unscriptural and illiberal means to establish their own principles amongst their fellow-men; we cannot forget that their commingling of the civil with the religious often led to the evils which they once deprecated when they were the parties aggrieved; neither can we avoid perceiving, that their synodical and presbyterial arrangements often opened a door to spiritual domination on the part of majorities over those who conscientiously differed from them. They did not possess that perfect shield of liberty which apostolic institutions provided; and, retaining the predilections of the fourth century, were not sufficiently enlightened to return to the purer principles of the first.

While these witnesses for the truth were perpetuating their faith, and suffering at the hands of the Romish church in the west, the Paulicians were occupying a similar position in reference to the Greek church in the east. Their history, commencing with Paul of Samosata,* in the third century, appears from time to time through a period of eight or nine hundred years. To judge from the calumnies of their

* They were also called Paulians, from which circumstance some have supposed that their peculiarity consisted in appealing to the writings of the Apostle Paul against the authority and practices of

enemies and the loose statements of modern historians, they were the most obstinate of heretics. On inquiry, however, it appears that their chief error consisted in appealing to Scripture, and refusing adhesion to a corrupt church. Petrus Siculus, who treated with them as an ambassador at Tibrica, where they defended their liberties under favour of the Saracens in the ninth century, wrote against them afterwards, in his "History of the Manichæans;" calumniating them by the company in which he placed them, and, happily, refuting his own calumny, by the details adduced against them.* It is a singular circumstance,—if the Paulicians were a "pernicious sect," and the abettors of "pestilential doctrines,"—that the period of the highest corruption and immorality in the Greek church should have been the period of *their* fiercest persecution. Such, however, is the fact. In the ninth century, when "the ignorance and corruption that dishonoured

the Greek church.—See Liberty of Conscience Illustrated, by J. W. Massie, D.D., p. 33. Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. liv.

* For example, he states that Sergius, one of their leaders, was won over and corrupted by a Manichæan woman. The following dialogue shows in what her Manichæanism consisted :—"Tell me," she says, "why you do not read the sacred gospels." To which Sergius replies, "It is not lawful for us who are profane to read those books, but belongs to the priests." "Not so," she rejoins; "it is not as you suppose; for there is no accepting of persons with God, who would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. But your priests, because they adulterate the Word of God, and hide its mysteries contained in the gospels, do not read to you, who cannot read for yourselves, all the things which are written."

the Christian church were great beyond measure," * the Greeks were engaged in "a most bitter controversy, or, to speak more properly, in a bloody and barbarous war with the Paulicians." In the reigns of Michael Curopalates and Leo the Arminian, and more especially under the regency of the empress Theodora, the sufferings they endured in consequence of refusing to return to the bosom of the church are almost incredible. The decree of the empress was one of extermination; and myriads perished, either through fire or sword, or under the slower processes of a most barbarous torture. The Saracens had compassion upon those whom the self-constituted orthodox of the Christian church hasted to destroy; and but for Mohammedan humanity the sect would have been annihilated.

What more nearly concerns us, however, in reference to the Paulicians, some of whom are said to have settled in Bulgaria, and to have mingled with the antagonists of Roman domination in the west, † is the amount of liberty, based on scriptural views of the church's organization and constitution, which they brought to light and embodied in their ecclesi-

* Mosheim, cent. ix. Part II. chap. iii. sec. iii. See also the whole of this century.

† Bossuet, in his History of the variations of the Protestant Churches, book xi., endeavours to connect the history of the Vaudois, Albigenses, etc., with that of the Paulicians. See in particular, sect. 16. The patience of the candid reader is sorely taxed in reading this history of variations. Often, however, the passionate prejudices of the writer create a smile. For example, speaking of the Paulicians, he says, "This sect, so hidden, so abominable, so full of seduction, of superstition, and hypocrisy, notwithstanding imperial laws which condemned its followers to death, yet maintained and diffused itself."

astical system. We can afford to pass over the doctrinal errors falsely imputed to them, seeing that nothing is more common than for persecutors to invent an obnoxious creed for those whom they wrong; but we must pause to notice the simplicity of their views in respect to church fellowship and order—a matter respecting which they were less likely to be misrepresented. "They had not," says Mosheim, "an ecclesiastical government administered by bishops, priests, and deacons; they had no sacred order of men distinguished by their manner of life, their habit, or any other circumstance, from the rest of the assembly; nor had councils, synods, or such like institutions, any place in their religious policy. They had certain doctors whom they called *Sunecdemi*, that is, companions in the journey of life, and also *Notarii*. Among these there reigned a perfect equality, and they had no peculiar rights, privileges, nor any external mark of dignity to distinguish them from the people. The only singularity that attended their promotion to the rank of doctors was, that they changed their lay-names for scriptural ones, as if there had been something peculiarly venerable in the names of the holy men, whose lives and actions are recorded in the sacred writings. They received all the books of the New Testament, except the two epistles of St. Peter, which they rejected, for reasons unknown to us; and their copies of the gospel were exactly the same with those used by all other Christians, without the least interpolation of the sacred text. They, moreover, recommended to the people, without exception, and that with the most affecting and ardent zeal, the constant and assiduous perusal of the Holy Scriptures; and expressed the utmost indig-

nation against the Greeks, who allowed to the priests alone an access to these sacred fountains of Divine knowledge."

Whatever opinion may be formed respecting the appropriation of scripture names on the part of the Paulician doctors, (a practice not more remarkable than that followed in England by the Puritans and others), it is evident that a great degree of religious freedom was enjoyed by all the members of this much abused sect, and that, too, on a systematic basis of enlightened principle. When the bishop and presbyter of the Greek church had so far departed from the original functions of those who bore the two-fold name in apostolic times, it is not astonishing that the Paulicians should prefer another nomenclature, lest by using it they should appear to sanction novelty instead of ancient practice. Evidently, however, the Sunecdemi and Notarii were ministers, to whom a proper respect was paid; while it is as evident that they had no personal authority. They were "helpers of the joy" of the faithful, instead of "masters;" "companions beloved and highly esteemed for their works' sake," rather than "lords over God's heritage." The total absence of all synodical authority is another circumstance which marks a primitive origin, and evinces an enlightened state of mind in respect to the principles of fellowship and association; while the constant and earnest reference to Scripture, as the practical guide of the individual as well as of the church, confirms the conviction that more of religious freedom was systematically enjoyed amongst this people than is elsewhere to be found previous to the Reformation. Nothing has been specifically recorded

respecting their congregational arrangements.* Rejecting, however, as they did, the authority of synods and councils, the inference is necessary that their mode of church organization was characterized by the utmost simplicity. A true religious equality was observed amongst them, which led them to repudiate the domination of their own teachers equally with that of the Catholic church. Their prosperity was greatest in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. From the thirteenth we perceive symptoms of corruption, arising from a neglect of the apostolic writings, more especially those of the apostle Paul; until at last their religion was disgraced by the worship of the cross and the practice of sacrifice imported from the wilds of Tartary.†

Leaving the Paulicians, we now turn to our own country in the time of Wycliffe‡ and his followers, generally known by the name of Lollards,§ for the purpose of inquiring how far the principles of religious freedom were advanced by them. "Had Wycliffe," says a modern writer, "attracted the warm and mighty

* Gibbon mentions something in respect to this point. "From the blood and ashes of the first victims, a succession of *teachers* and *congregations* repeatedly arose." This might be the case, yet without an intelligent conviction respecting the duty of congregational self-government.

† Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. liv.

‡ Born A.D. 1324, died Dec. 31, 1384.

§ From *lollen*, to sing with a low voice. The name originated in Flanders about the year 1300, in consequence of the practice of singing dirges at the funerals of those who died of the plague. These good Christians took a pious care of those who thus died, when all besides neglected them. The name was used afterwards as a term of reproach. See Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. xiv. Part II. chap. ii. sec. xxxvi.

spirits then awakening around him, and could he have consorted with them, in plan and well-directed agency —that morning-star of the Reformation had not dwelt apart, but might have, like the lodestar, represented a universal influence, and shone the centre of a mighty constellation." * Probably no one man ever exerted a more legitimate and direct influence over the age in which he lived. His mission was that of the teacher; and few, if any, owed less to adventitious circumstances in the diffusion of their principles. His path was that of a sunbeam amidst the darkness. The common-place eulogium, that he was before his age, is below the mark. His age was the age of Wycliffe, and succeeding ages all reap the benefit. No one aimed more deadly blows at the corruptions of Rome and her clergy. But this was a small achievement in comparison with his lucid exposition of the great truths of the gospel. The first principle of Independency, pertaining to liberty of private judgment, was asserted by him in the boldest manner, and fenced round with every variety of scripture argument. "Christian men," he writes, "are certain of the reality of their faith by the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, and that the truth in the gospel was taught by Christ and his apostles, though all the clerks of antichrist say the contrary never so fast, and on pain of their curse, and imprisonment, and burning. And this faith is not grounded on the pope and his cardinals, for then it must fail and be undone, as they fail and are sometimes destroyed; but it rests on Jesus Christ, God and man, and on the Holy Trinity, and so it may never fail except from his

* Missions, by Richard Winter Hamilton, LL,D., D.D. p. 35.

default, who, while he should love and serve God, faileth in these things. Almighty God and his truth are the foundation of the faith of Christian men; and, as St. Paul saith, 'other foundation may no man set beside that which is set, that is Jesus Christ.' Therefore, though antichrist and all his clerks were buried deep in hell for their simony and pride, and other sins, yet the faith of the Christian faileth not, because these are not the ground thereof, but Jesus Christ. He is our God, and our best Master; and ever ready to teach true men all things which are profitable and needful to their souls. But they would have, that whatever their prelates teach openly and maintain steadfastly, were of as great authority, and even more than is the gospel of Christ. And thus they would destroy Holy Writ, and Christian faith, and at length maintain that whatever they do is no sin."* "The law of God and reason," he writes elsewhere, "we should follow more than that of our popes and cardinals; so much so, that if we had a hundred popes, and if all the friars were cardinals, to the law of the gospel we should bow, more than to all this multitude." †

In reference to the Christian church he says, "when men speak of holy church, anon, they understand prelates and priests, with monks, and canons, and friars, and all men who have tonsures, though they live accursedly, and never so contrary to the law of God. But they call not the seculars men of holy church, though they live never so truly, according to God's law, and die in perfect charity. Nevertheless, all who shall be saved in the bliss of heaven are mem-

* Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe, vol. ii. pp. 241, 242.

† Ibid. p. 247.

bers of holy church, and no more." And, again, "Christian men, taught in God's law, call holy church the congregation of just men, for whom Jesus Christ shed his blood; and not mere stones and timber, and earthly dross, which the clerks of antichrist magnify more than the righteousness of God, and the souls of men." *

He agrees with the Independents in respect to the two orders of officers in the church. "By the ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops were all one. But, afterwards, the emperor divided them, and made bishops lords, and priests their servants; and this was the cause of envy, and quenched much charity. For the ordinances of Christ are founded in meekness, in unity, and charity, and in contempt of riches and high estate." Again, "I boldly assert one thing, namely, that in the primitive church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient, that is, a priest and a deacon. In like manner I affirm, that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and bishop, were names of the same office. This appears from the third chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy, and in the first chapter of the Epistle to Titus. And the same is certified by that profound theologian, Jerome." †

He was an advocate for returning to the voluntary principle in supporting religion, more especially in the payment of Christian ministers for their good offices. "Would God," he exclaims, "that all wise and true men would inquire whether it were not better for to find priests by the free alms of the people, and in a reasonable livelihood, that

* Ibid. pp. 313, 314.
† Ibid. p. 309.

they may teach the gospel in word and deed, as did Christ and his apostles, than thus to pay tithes as men are now constrained by a new ordinance of priests, to a worldly priesthood, ignorant and negligent. If this first ordinance of Christ and his apostles come again to Christendom, then shall Christ's people be free to withhold their tithes and offerings from wayward priests, and no more maintain them in sin." *

At the same time he was not sufficiently enlightened to see, that Christ had by his apostles instituted local church organization as a perpetual ordinance of manageable self-government amongst Christ's people, which excluded synodical, diocesan, and secular authority by its very nature. Hence he allowed things in this respect to remain as they were. "Let the parochial boundaries in the ecclesiastical state remain; let the present system of patronage continue undisturbed; but let the men introduced to the care of souls, in such places, remember how it was with their predecessors in the year before Constantine, with the Master whose name they bear, and with the apostles whom they esteem it their honour to succeed. As thus appointed, let what they solicit from the magistrate be simply protection; and to meet the evils arising from the withholding of settled pastors from the established cures, and the many which must be inseparable from the appointment of improper men, let such priests as may prefer the labours of the evangelist to the more regular duties of the parochial shepherd, be allowed to act upon that preference, regulating their steps in all things, by the

* Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe, vol. ii. p. 290.

necessities of the people and the prospects of usefulness." *

From these particulars, we see how far Wycliffe had advanced unaided in that early age. The idea of the momentous results which would attend a revival of Independent congregational polity, on the platform of an apostolic order of things, never struck his mind. Neither he nor any reformers before him asked how it was that the churches of the apostolic age had no visible bond of ecclesiastical union and subordination. It is one thing to discern the fitness of an instituted order of things to accomplish a certain end, when attention has been directed to it; quite another to light upon the course of inquiry which leads to an appreciation of that fitness. The vast continent of the new world spread itself out over half the globe for ages before Columbus discovered its existence; and, once discovered, the wonder was that it had never been discovered before. So in respect to the Divine institution of Congregational Independency. The aptness of the analogy is not diminished by the circumstance that the New Testament always contained the record of the primitive rule of Christian fellowship and self-government. The record may lie open to inspection, and any one whose attention is directed to certain truths contained in it may discern them there at once; but it is possible for those truths to lie hidden and unappreciated for ages, unless peculiar circumstances turn the mind to them.

It is probable, however, that some of the followers of Wycliffe, even in his day, became practically independent, without any clear views respecting the nature

* Ibid. pp. 300, 301.

of their proceedings, and simply as the result of following out the free impulses of their own spirits in respect to the advancement of Christ's kingdom. At the close of Wycliffe's life, they were very numerous. "Starting like saplings from the root of a tree," says a contemporary, "they were multiplied, and filled every place within the compass of the land." * Like the members of the church of Jerusalem, they "went everywhere preaching the word;" supplementing the less acceptable labours of the popish clergy, and becoming curates of souls without emolument, but with large congregations and much success. "These preachers," says the same contemporary, "always pretended in their discourses to have a great respect for the law of God, or, as they expressed themselves, *Goddis law;* to which they avowed themselves as strictly conformed both in their opinions and their conduct." Nay, more; "like their Master, they were too eloquent, and too much for other people, in all contentions by word of mouth. Mighty in words, they exceeded all men in making speeches, out-talking every one in litigious disputations. Both men and women, though never so lately converted to this sect, were distinguished by the same modes of speech, and by a wonderful agreement in the same opinions."

It is evident from these and many other testimonies, which might be adduced if they were needed, that the doctrines of Wycliffe were widely diffused. The opposition of the Romish clergy in England and on the continent of Europe, could not prevent their transmission from district to district, and generation to generation. The indignity done to the mortal

* Knighton, Canon of Leicester, quoted by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 188.

remains of the mighty dead forty-one years after they had been laid in the grave,—when, according to tradition, after being reduced to ashes, they were thrown into the Swift,—could not repress the influence of principles embalmed in the minds of so many of his countrymen. The very means employed to dishonour them, facilitated their diffusion. As Fuller quaintly observes respecting his ashes, that they were conveyed by the Swift into the Avon, by the Avon into the Severn, by the Severn into the narrow seas, and by the narrow seas into the main ocean; * so the truths which Wycliffe expounded were borne along through innumerable channels, and became the means of perpetuating and advancing Christ's spiritual kingdom in many lands. Many political and ecclesiastical changes calculated to retard the progress of religious freedom in our own country, intervened between the time of Wycliffe and the Reformation. The statute for the burning of heretics, † enacted in the reign of Henry the fourth, and the constitutions of archbishop Arundel, adopted by a convocation of the clergy about the same time, ‡ had for their object the extermina-

* Fuller's Church Hist. of Britain, book iv. cent. xv.

† By this statute it was enacted, that when the sentence was duly announced "the magistrate shall take into hand the same persons so offending, and any of them, and cause them openly to be burned in the sight of all the people, to the intent that this kind of punishment may be a terror unto others, that the like wicked doctrine and heretical opinions, or the authors and favourers thereof, be no more maintained within this realm."

‡ These constitutions decreed, amongst other things, that all books written by John Wycliffe and others of his time, and all hereafter to be written, are to be banished from schools, halls, hospitals, and all places whatsoever, excepting such as may be approved by a council of twelve persons, to be chosen by one or both

tion of the Lollards. But instead of decreasing, they multiplied. "Who would have thought," says Fox,* the martyrologist, "by these laws and constitutions, so substantially founded, so circumspectly provided, so diligently executed, but that the name and memory of this persecuted sect should have been utterly rooted up, and never could have stood? And yet, such be the works of the Lord, passing all men's admiration, that, notwithstanding all this, so far was it off that the number and courage of these good men were indeed vanquished, that they rather multiplied daily, especially at London and Lincolnshire,† Norfolk, and Herefordshire, in Shrewsbury, in Calais, and in divers other quarters more."

However numerous the followers of Wycliffe, it does not appear that any considerable advance was made on his peculiar principles. No records have reached us affording proof that his views respecting the relation subsisting between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers were confirmed by additional arguments, much less improved upon by further scriptural inquiry. Many noble spirits were prepared to suffer extreme punishment, rather than yield their faith up to this point, of whom Lord Cobham was an illus-

of the universities; that no man shall hereafter translate any text of Scripture into English upon his own authority; that men shall not presume to dispute on any of the articles determined by holy church; and that the strictest inquisition shall be made to prosecute all suspected of holding Wycliffe's doctrine under the "new and damnable name of Lollardie."—Vaughan's Wycliffe, vol. ii. p. 393, 394.

* Acts and Monuments, i. 686, 687.

† Even so late as 1521, more than five hundred Wycliffites were cited before the bishop of Lincoln.

trious example. * Many churches were gathered in the conventicles, or "schools" as they were then termed, in various parts of the country; and the fellowship which they enjoyed, secluded as they were from the observation of the clergy to avoid persecution, was necessarily congregational. But unless further evidence than has yet come to light assures us of the fact, it cannot be admitted as indisputable that the congregational polity was *recognized* as a scriptural institution.

Even in Bohemia, where the principles of the British reformer obtained so wide a diffusion, it does not appear that any advance was made in respect to congregational liberty. John Huss was an avowed follower of Wycliffe, and in no essential particular before his master. It is true he was charged with being affected with "the leprosy of the Vaudois;" but this, so far from disproving, confirms our judgment. His most obnoxious opinions were, that the pope is on a level with other bishops; that all priests are officially equal; that the clergy ought to be poor, subsisting on voluntary contributions; and that it is the right of all men to preach the word of God. While, therefore, we admire the meek fortitude of Huss in submitting to the stake,† we cannot avoid the conclusion that, if the reformation which he desired had been effected, much would still have remained to be undone, in order to the enjoyment of a primitive apostolic freedom in the church of Christ.

* See Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe, vol. ii. chap. ix. for an admirable account of Lord Cobham's character, opinions, and martyrdom.

† Huss suffered July 6th, 1415; and Jerome of Prague on May 30th, 1416.

We now come to the period of the Great Reformation, respecting which so much has been written, and in relation to which so much antagonistic feeling exists, dividing all Europe, that it is difficult even yet to judge impartially of its true character and merits. Our reference to it, however, is simple and definite. We do not at present contemplate it as a theatre of action—an epoch in the history of European freedom transcending every other, whether before or since, in which every kingdom took part, and every power civil and ecclesiastical became necessarily involved. Neither do we refer to it as a starting point of new life for man in reference to Christian doctrine, momentous as we conceive it to have been in this respect.* The measure we have to apply to it is the one we have already applied to antecedent movements in the history of the church—that of a primitive and unerring standard. The vast scale on which the Re-

* The views of Sir James Mackintosh in reference to the Reformation are as far-sighted as any we have seen, and were the result of the ethical habits of his mind. "It was fortunate," he says, "that Tetzel found Luther busied in the contemplation of the principle which is the basis of all ethical judgment, and by the power of which he struck a mortal blow at superstition: 'Men are not made truly righteous by performing certain actions which are externally good; but men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform virtuous actions.'. . . The general terms which are here used enunciate a proposition equally certain and sublime; the basis of all pure ethics, the cement of the eternal alliance between morality and religion, and the badge of the independence of both on the low motives and dim insight of human laws. Luther, in a more specific application of his principle, used it to convey his doctrine of justification by faith; but the very generality of his own terms proves the applicability of the principle to be far more extensive."—Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 139.

formation proceeded, the wonderful combination of circumstances which gave it success, the momentous results which attended and still attend it, the genius, and piety, and heroism, of the men who conducted it, are all irrelevant to the precise topic now under investigation. Referring our readers for information on these points to those authors who have conferred such a boon on our times by their writings on this portion of history, and in particular to the incomparable work of Dr. D'Aubigné, we are concerned to inquire how far the immediate results of the Reformation were characterized by the prevalence of right views respecting religious freedom.

Viewing the subject in this light only, we are compelled to acquiesce in the judgment of the philosophic historian, that "the Reformation was the first successful example of resistance to human authority," and little more. Gigantic as were the efforts of Luther in opposition to the church of Rome, and completely successful as they proved in liberating one half of Europe from an insupportable tyranny; it must, nevertheless, be confessed, that the liberty achieved in one direction was not completed in another, but has remained, even to the present day, an unfinished work. "Every Reformer has erected, all his followers have laboured to support, a little papacy in their own community. The founders of each sect owned, indeed, that they had themselves revolted against the most ancient and universal authorities of the world; but they, happy men! had learnt all truth, they therefore forbad all attempts to enlarge her stores, and drew the line beyond which human reason must no longer be allowed to cast a glance." *

* Mackintosh's Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 132.

It is a singular circumstance that those who were sustained by the spirit of a conscientious integrity in opposing the pretensions of Rome, failed to apply their own principle afterwards when their opposition was crowned with success; and, however accounted for, remains as a fatal blemish in the work of the Reformer of the sixteenth century. Neither can it be questioned that a remarkable opportunity of bringing the great contest for religious freedom to a triumphant issue was thrown away mainly through the influence of the great Reformer himself. His faith in apostolic institutions was not equal to his faith in apostolic doctrines. He embraced the latter with all his heart, and was content that they should gradually develope their power in the believing soul. But of the suitability of the former to all the exigencies of the church and the world be had his doubts. In fact, he knew not their Divine adaptation to all the ends of Christian fellowship. When any one impugned his principle of "justification by faith alone," as one which might be turned to immoral uses, he put forth all his energy to repel the slander on a Divinely revealed truth, and to reduce his opponent to submission. But although the same Divine book from which he drew this "doctrine of a standing or falling church," delegated a self-governing power to Christ's people in every place where they might be gathered for fellowship, he either failed to perceive the fact, or doubted its universal obligation. He looked too much at the circumstances of the day, and too little at the pattern before him in the New Testament. Having rased to the ground the proud structure erected by man in the name of God, he became suddenly awed at the blank vastness of the area thereby

cleared, and instead of converting it into a seed-plot where truth might gradually spring up according to the Divine law of development, was too anxious to cover over the whole space at once. Hence the painful result—another merely human edifice in the place of the former.

The first ecclesiastical constitution produced by the Reformation was more scriptural than any that succeeded, and but for one element would have been perfect. It was framed "for the churches of Hesse, and in order that some other churches might be moved to the same course;" * and may, therefore, be regarded as the model of the new churches of the Reformation.

Its chief provisions were as follows:—

"The church can only be taught and governed by the Word of its Sovereign Pastor. Whoever has recourse to any other word shall be deposed and excommunicated.

"Every pious man, learned in the Word of God, whatever be his conditon, may be elected bishop if he desire it, for he is called inwardly of God.

"Let no one believe that by a bishop we understand anything else than a simple minister of the Word of God.

"The ministers are servants, and, consequently, they ought not to be lords, princes, or governors.

"Let the faithful assemble and choose their bishops and deacons. Each church should elect its own pastor.

"Let those who are elected bishops be consecrated to their office by the imposition of the hands of three

* Schminke, Monumenta Hassiaca, vol. ii. p. 588. Quoted by D'Aubigné, Book xiii. chap. iii.

bishops; and as for the deacons, if there are no ministers present, let them receive the laying on of hands from the elders of the church.

"If a bishop cause any scandal to the church by his effeminacy, by the splendour of his garments, or by levity of conduct, and if, on being warned, he persists, let him be deposed by the church.

"Let each church place its bishop in a condition to live with his family, and to be hospitable, as St. Paul enjoins; but let the bishops exact nothing for their casual duties.

"On every Sunday let there be in some suitable place an assembly of all the men who are in the number of the saints, to regulate with the bishop according to God's Word, all the affairs of the church, and to excommunicate whoever gives occasion of scandal to the church; for the church of Christ has never existed without exercising the power of excommunication.

"As a weekly assembly is necessary for the direction of the particular churches, so a general synod should be held annually for the direction of all the churches in the country.

"All the pastors are its natural members; but each church shall further elect from its body a man full of the Spirit and of faith, to whom it shall entrust its powers for all that is in the jurisdiction of the synod.

"Three visitors shall be elected yearly, with commission to go through all the churches, to examine those who have been elected bishops, to confirm those who have been approved of, and to provide for the execution of the decrees of the synod." *

* D'Aubigné's Hist. of the Reformation, Book xiii. chap. iii.

From this it is apparent that the Reformers, in the first instance, admitted the principle of the church's self-government as something with which the state might not interfere: and each local church was vested with powers greater than were ever enjoyed before. The great defect in this constitution consisted in the synodical authority attached to the congregational, which necessarily limited the latter, and tended to rob it of all vitality. The error committed in the third century, and which operated so disastrously in subsequent periods, was thereby introduced again, and with the same effects. In the course of time, six superintendents for life were substituted for the three annual visitors; one change after another subverted the independence of the local churches; and ultimately the original constitution was converted into a system of spiritual despotism.

Although Luther, at one time, seemed to acquiesce in the principles of the above constitution, he afterwards wavered to a great degree, and finally adopted another system. In 1523, when the Bohemians needed ministers, he wrote to them:—"If you have no other means of procuring pastors, rather do without them, and let each head of a family read the gospel in his own house, and baptize his children, sighing after the sacrament of the altar as the Jews at Babylon did for Jerusalem. First, seek God by prayer; then, being assembled together with all those whose hearts God has touched, choose, in the Lord's name, him or them whom you shall have acknowledged to be fitted for the ministry. After that, let the chief men among you lay their hands on them, and recommend them to the people and to the church." * This was a good

* Ibid.

beginning—an acknowledgement of the power and right of the Christian people; and probably, if the secret convictions of Luther's mind had continued to sway his conduct, he would have proceeded in his work of re-construction more or less in this spirit. But he became alarmed, and leaned to other counsel than that of God's Word and his own heart. Multitudes who had joined the Reformers, both priests and people, had no religion of their own. They had simply joined in the opposition to Rome; and when successful in that, were as little inclined to bow before Luther as before Clement. "Alas!" said the Reformer, "they have abandoned their Romish doctrines and rites, and they scoff at ours." Instead of calling upon all his confederates to commence with evangelizing efforts in the spirit of the gospel, leaving it to truth and God's blessing to raise up a people, he was impatient, and called in the aid of "the powers that be" to accomplish the necessary work. "Your highness," he said, addressing the Elector of Saxony in 1526, "in your quality of guardian of youth, and of all those who know not how to take care of themselves, should compel the inhabitants, who desire neither pastors nor schools, to receive these means of grace, as they are compelled to work on the roads, on bridges, and such like services. The papal order being abolished, it is your duty to regulate these things: no other person cares about them, no other can, and no other ought to do so. Commission, therefore, four persons to visit all the country; let two of them inquire into the tithes and church property, and let two take charge of the doctrine, schools, churches, and pastors." * The elector

* D'Aubigné, book xiii. chap. iii.

yielded; the commission was appointed; Melancthon was appointed to draw up the necessary instructions; the commissioners discharged their task; and a great error was perpetuated, which, if not immediately visible in its results, was felt in due time, and is in operation to this day.

It is unnecessary to refer to further events in the concluding period of the Reformation. The protest of Spires,* the conference of Marburg,† the confession of Augsburg,‡ are all-important incidents in the progress of events. But they were all connected with a more than tacit understanding that, in some shape or other, human authority might determine points of faith

* This protest, which is the origin of the term Protestant, was delivered on the 19th April, 1529. The language was,—"We PROTEST by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Saviour, and who will one day be our judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in any thing that is contrary to God, to his holy Word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls, and to the last decree of Spires." The princes of the empire who entered this protest, were John, elector of Saxony; George, elector of Brandenburg; Ernest and Francis, Dukes of Lunenburg; the landgrave of Hesse; and the prince of Anhalt.

† This conference was held in the castle of Marburg, in October 1529, at the instigation of Philip of Hesse. Its object was to bring the Swiss and German reformers to articles of agreement, that there might not be any appearance of division amongst them. The historian of the Reformation has depicted the scene in his usual graphic manner, book xiii. chap. vii. The Marburg articles were the first bulwark against Rome erected in common by the Reformers. Luther and Melancthon represented the Germans, Zwingle and Œcolampadius the Swiss.

‡ This confession was drawn up by Melancthon, and presented to the emperor Charles amidst circumstances of great excitement on the 25th of June, 1530.

and dictate in matters of religion to Christ's people. Even the diet of Spires, in 1526, which allowed each state to manage its own ecclesiastical affairs until a general council should be called by the emperor, delegated to the princes of Germany, in their respective dominions, that authority which had previously been exercised by the Roman Catholic church. And yet this was considered the period in which the greatest amount of liberty was enjoyed—a three years' cessation of that constitution-mongering to which the Reformers of that and succeeding ages have been so much given.

The immediate results of the Reformation, although so widely different in the specific forms of ecclesiastical organization adopted by the various Protestant countries, were all marred more or less by the same prevailing error. The Lutheran or "Evangelical church," the earliest offspring of the Reformation, clothed the civil rulers of every state with a spiritual supremacy, and acknowledged the authority of the councils, or consistories, appointed by the sovereign to watch over the interests of religion. Amidst all the changes of this church, the vitiating element remained for ever after; and the name of Luther, the liberator of conscience, has been attached to a system in many respects as objectionable, on grounds of principle, as the papacy itself.

The confession of Augsburg is a noble confession, and associated with one of the most stirring scenes in the history of Germany, and in the struggle for religious liberty. "Many," says the last article, "have unskilfully confounded the episcopal and the temporal power; and from this confusion have resulted great wars, revolts, and seditions. It is for this reason, and

to re-assure men's consciences, that we feel ourselves constrained to establish the difference which exists between the power of the church and the power of the sword.

"We therefore teach, that the power of the keys or of the bishops is, conformably with the Word of the Lord, a commandment emanating from God, to preach the gospel, to remit or retain sins, and to administer the sacraments. This power has reference only to eternal goods, is exercised only by the minister of the Word, and does not trouble itself with political administration. The political administration, on the other hand, is busied with everything else but the gospel. The magistrate protects, not souls, but bodies and temporal possessions. He defends them against all attacks from without, and, by making use of the sword and of punishment, compels men to observe civil justice and peace.

"For this reason we must take particular care not to mingle the power of the church with the power of the state. The power of the church ought never to invade an office that is foreign to it; for Christ himself said, '*My kingdom is not of this world.*' And again: '*Who made me a judge over you?*' St. Paul said to the Philippians, '*Our citizenship is in heaven.*' And to the Corinthians: '*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.*'

"It is thus that we distinguish the two governments and the two powers, and that we honour both as the most excellent gifts that God has given here on earth."

This is a noble discrimination between things that differ, and would appear to include all that is desired even by the warmest advocates of religious freedom.

Yet the authors of the confession did not intend by this instrument to cut themselves off from the patronage of the civil power, as their subsequent conduct proved.

Again; in reference to private judgment, the language of the same article of the confession would appear to be explicit. "The duty of the bishops," it proceeds to say, "is therefore to preach the gospel, to forgive sins, and to exclude from the Christian church all who rebel against the Lord, but without human power, and solely by the Word of God. If the bishops act thus, the churches ought to be obedient to men, according to this declaration of Christ, '*Whoever heareth you heareth me.*'

"But if the bishops teach anything that is contrary to the gospel, then the churches have an order from God which forbids them to obey. And St. Augustine himself, in his letter against Pertilian, writes: 'We must not obey the catholic bishops, if they go astray, and teach anything contrary to the canonical Scriptures of God.'"

If we set this part of the confession in the light of Luther's own conduct, whether at Marburg or elsewhere, we shall be compelled to infer, that it could not mean all that it seems to express; seeing that no man was more bigotted than he in respect to his own interpretation of Scripture; no man less willing to allow a private departure from it, on any article of conceived importance.

Although, therefore, the Confession of Augsburg was retained amongst the standards of the Lutheran church, it must be regarded very much in the same light as some of the articles of the Church of England; as conveying sentiments which were to be interpreted in their

meaning, and limited in their operation, by other articles, or other parts of the general system. The actual result, so far as the Lutheran or evangelical church is concerned, was a change of masters and authorities, in many important respects for the better; but still only a change, with the prospect of further struggles at some future day. The roaring and dashing tide, after reaching the highest point, quietly subsided into the ancient bed; and authority, under new forms, still maintained its hold upon the spirit and conscience of man.

The same may be said of the "Reformed" churches, so termed in distinction from the Lutheran.

Zwingle in Switzerland laboured hard for a pure faith and a simple Christian worship, and was to a great degree successful. But he committed a fatal error in respect to the manner of accomplishing and perpetuating this desirable object. He became a political as well as ecclesiastical leader; incorporated the church with the state; made the clergy civil functionaries, and placed them with due subordination of ranks under government control. He went farther than this. With mistaken policy and zeal he sought to compel all the Cantons to accept the religion of the Reformation. His death on the battle field, in the garb, not of a minister, but of a warrior, was a striking lesson on the sin and folly of attempting to establish the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus by the most carnal of all weapons.*

* The narrative of the death of Zwingle is one of the most touching scenes in D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation. See book xvi. chap. viii. It is hardly true, however, to say that "Luther and the German Reformation declined the aid of the temporal power." The circumstances of Germany and Switzerland

The genius of Calvin was more potent than that of Zwingle, and its results were more widely celebrated. To the present time his name is associated with the theological opinions of a great portion of the protestant communities. But it is with the church principles of Calvin alone that we have to do.* The immediate effects of his influence in Geneva,—where the affairs of the church were committed to his direction, and where he enjoyed the power of a bishop, presiding over the assembly of the clergy and in the consistory,—are sufficiently indicated by the terms of the inscrip-

were widely different. In the former, the reformed religion was established without bloodshed; in the latter it was retarded by an intestine war. But what led to the peace of Augsburg in 1555? Is it probable that Charles would have altered his whole line of previous policy in relation to the Protestants, if he had not been surprised at Inspruk by the army of Maurice? The emperor's letters to Rome before this time breathe out threatenings and slaughter against the Reformers, as D'Aubigné has shown. (Book iv. chap. xii.) But the treaty of Passau, and the peace of Augsburg followed immediately upon Maurice's decisive conduct. If Charles had been less fearful of consequences, the whole empire might have been embroiled in a dreadful war, in comparison with which the wars of Switzerland would have been insignificant. Such a war would have been called the war of the Reformation. Happily it was averted; but not by passive obedience. The cause of faith was not altogether won by faith. See Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. xvi. sect. i.

* "The followers of Calvin assumed the designation of the reformed church, perhaps with the intention of marking more strongly that they had made more changes in church government than their protestant brethren. A Calvinist and a presbyterian became in England synonymous terms. The word Calvinist now denotes all who, in any Protestant communion, embrace the doctrine of absolute predestination. It is synonymous with predestinarian. Many episcopalians are now Calvinists; many presbyterians are anti-Calvinists." Mackintosh's Hist. of England, vol. ii. p. 144.

tion on the walls of the City Hall of Geneva. It was as follows:

"In the year 1535, the tyranny of Roman Anti-Christ having been overthrown and its superstitions abolished, the most holy religion of Jesus Christ was established here in its purity, and the church better organized, by an extraordinary blessing of God. And at the same time, this city itself having repulsed its enemies and put them to flight, was again set free, but not without a remarkable miracle. The council and the people of Geneva have here erected this monument to perpetuate its memory, so that the testimony of their gratitude toward God should descend to their posterity." *

This inscription, which remained for nearly three centuries, or from 1536 to 1798, on the walls of the City Hall, was a standing memorial, not only of the remarkable miracle, but also of the relation which subsisted between the church organized by Calvin and the state of Geneva. "The views and projects of this great man," says Mosheim, "were grand and extensive. For he not only undertook to give strength and vigour to the rising church, by framing the wisest laws and the most salutary institutions for the maintenance of order, and the advancement of true piety, but even proposed to render Geneva the mother, the seminary of all the reformed churches, as Wirtemberg was of all the Lutheran communities. He laid a scheme for sending forth from this little republic the succours and ministers that were to promote and propagate the Protestant cause through the most distant nations, and aimed at nothing less than

* Lutheranism and Calvinism. D'Aubigné's Discourses and Essays, Collins, p. 287.

rendering the government, discipline, and doctrine of Geneva the model and rule of imitation to the Reformed churches throughout the world. The undertaking was great, and worthy of the extensive genius and capacity of this eminent man; and, great and arduous as it was, it was executed in part, nay, carried on to a very considerable length, by his indefatigable assiduity and inextinguishable zeal."*

Instead of incorporating the church with the state, as Zwingle had done, Calvin sought to make the church a separate and independent body legislating for itself, yet with the sanction and protection of the state as its avowed ecclesiastical co-ordinate. This was a favourite idea of the Genevese reformer, and of those who in various countries have followed his system.† It has been deemed the nearest approach to religious liberty compatible with state alliance; and has been supposed to be the fairest compromise between the civil and ecclesiastical powers ever broached in theory. Practically, however, it proved, and is ever likely to prove, an impossibility. The selection of one church with a definite creed and a specific ecclesiastical system to the exclusion of all others, implies not only a power of determining matters of faith and order, but a condemnation of every other church.‡ Thus mere protection, when afforded to

* Ecc. Hist. cent. xvi. sect. iii. part ii. The success was visible mainly in Holland, France, and Scotland. Germany and Switzerland were divided on the subject, never won. England was continually agitated, but the political element generally prevailed.

† The disruption of the Scottish church is the latest proof of the practical impossibility of an independent state church. The leaders of the free church, however, still cling to this theory.

‡ The late Professor Vinet has argued this point generally, in the most forcible manner, in his Essay on the Profession of Per-

one religious party in the state only, is an injustice which sooner or later manifests itself. It was so in the case of Geneva. The laws of the church respecting excommunication were enforced by the aid of the secular power, and those parties who lay under the ban of the church were treated as if they had committed a civil as well as ecclesiastical wrong. Not only was the arm of power employed to carry out the sentence of the church in reference to offenders against morality; but the opponents of Calvinistic doctrine were, in many instances, excluded from the privileges of citizenship, and even from the

sonal Religious Conviction; and upon the Separation of Church and State considered with reference to the fulfilment of that duty. "Society (he observes), or more strictly speaking, the state, which seems to have renounced the persecution of creeds, has not yet renounced their protection; and perhaps it will be expected that, having protested against persecution, we shall accept of protection with avidity. Yes, it is most true, that we desire that the profession of religious convictions should be protected; but protected as the common right of all, and consequently without distinction of creeds. We are not desirous that any particular creed should be protected, nor, in general, believers to the exclusion of unbelievers. We deprecate protection for the same reason that we deprecate persecution. For the right of protection necessarily involves the right of persecution. . . . You tell us that you desire only protection; that you abhor persecution: but the distinction is idle. You condemn yourself to submit to it, and, what is worse, to make use of it. Yes, whatever the modesty of your pretensions, or the weakness of your disposition, rest assured you will persecute; every protected religion has ended by persecuting; nay, even when oppressed, even when trodden under foot, it has persecuted. It has received, as the price of its own liberty, the power of trampling upon other liberties, which in their subjection could yet eclipse it. . . The more serious the religion, the more it is the result of conviction; the greater the importance attached by its followers to the knowledge and profession of its doctrines, the stronger will be the temptation."

walls of Geneva itself Thus a power of protection led to acts of great injustice, to be revenged at some future day.*

The ecclesiastical system adopted by Calvin assumed to be that of the primitive church; from which, however, it was, in fact, a wide departure. It was what is known under the name of presbyterian; and is essentially the same with that which prevails in Scotland to the present day. The individual and the congregation had some power in following their own conscientious convictions; but their liberty was nullified in any period of difference, by the superior power of the presbytery and synods. The apostolic churches were independent communities, over which no foreign authority had any control. The self-government was not in the churches as a confederated whole, but in each separate church. Calvin, however, introduced a superintending and controlling power, which, although representing in its members the opinions of the several congregations to some extent, decided by majorities on all points of dispute, and thereby infringed upon Christian liberty. This system was not incompatible *then* with an alliance with the state, nor with gross acts of tyranny over individuals and churches; and the same may be said of the system generally, wherever it has since prevailed.†

* See A Summer Ramble in Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, by John Massie, D.D., pp. 445—468, on the miserable condition of Geneva in the present day. The system of Calvin has been worked round by political changes into a complete subversion of the doctrine of Calvin, and the establishment of unitarianism.

† See vol. i. pp. 189—196, for an account of the first introduction of synodical, in contravention of congregational, authority.

It is unnecessary, after this review of the principal systems, which resulted from the Reformation, to inquire further respecting such as were, more or less, akin to them.* Suffice it to say, that in none was there an intelligent recognition of the rights of conscience, much less of that congregational self-government which was instituted by the apostles in order to their preservation. While there was much of appeal to Scripture as the final judge of controversy, and great resistance to the pretensions of Rome, there was practically too much submission to human authority in the interpretation of those Scriptures, and too much deference to the new power, whether secular or ecclesiastical, by which the former had been supplanted. In fact, the Reformation was of necessity an incomplete, because a preliminary work. Its leaders had been nursed amidst the workings of a despotic system; and, although sufficiently alive to its evils to throw off the yoke, were not prepared with another to occupy its place. To pull down and to build up are not only two widely different processes, but frequently require the very opposite order of genius.† The doctrinal errors and the superstitious

The term *presbyterian*, as applied to this system, is an assumption similar to that of *baptists* as assumed by the anti-pædo-baptists. The congregational churches have their presbyters *or* bishops also. See vol. i. pp. 46—56.

* It is scarcely necessary to refer to the Reformation of the church of England, since it originated with the monarch from the basest of motives, and resulted in an insular papacy, of which Henry the Eighth was head.

† Luther knew his own unfitness for the work of building up, and confessed it in the most honourable manner. He did not aspire to be an universal genius. Hence his manifold concessions to Melancthon, not always to the advantage of the popular cause.

practices of the church of Rome were the main objects of attention regarded by the Reformers of the sixteenth century; and, consequently, when it was needful as the result of success to set up something organic instead of the Romish hierarchy, they were generally at fault. Luther had scarcely made up his mind. Melancthon was for retaining everything not decidedly objectionable in theformer system; Zwingle handed over the church to the decision of the civil power; Calvin established a mistaken interpretation of the primitive organization; while Henry the Eighth transferred the power of the pope to his own sceptre.

On reviewing, then, the history of religious freedom previous to the revival of Independency, for the purpose of ascertaining what was aimed at and accomplished, we are unable to discern any where, except amongst the Paulicians, and amongst them only under peculiar circumstances, the complete recognition of the principles of religious liberty as Divinely eliminated and instituted. In every period we see more or less of resistance to authority, as the result of a kind of instinctive love of liberty, or as the consequence of strong convictions opposed to dominant theological dogmas. In every period we discern the footsteps of witnesses for "the truth as it is in Jesus," in conflict with, or in more unobserved separation from, constituted ecclesiastical authorities. In many periods we hear the Word of God appealed to as the source and final standard of truth in matters of religion, to the exclusion of human authority and tradition; yet more frequently in reference to matters of doctrine than of discipline and organization. In one period—that of the Reformation—we behold a successful attempt to

liberate the consciences of men from the overawing superstitions and antiquated oppressions of the church of Rome; the result of which is a new political and ecclesiastical division of the European nations into Popish and Protestant, and the throwing up of a high-way for the future march of civil and religious freedom. But in all the past, we discover nowhere a complete recognition of those Divine exponents of religious liberty which indicate how far Christ's people have the right, individually and socially, to govern themselves in the management of their religious affairs. The autonomy, or self-government, claimed for the church by such men as Calvin, by not going far enough in respect to the state, and by going too far in respect to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, was not the kind of autonomy sanctioned by Christ's word: was not the kind of Independence essential to the enjoyment of the highest possible religious liberty. The church's independence of the state, as advocated by such parties, was purely nominal; the state being called upon, not merely to recognize it, but to become its subservient and patron, executing its corporate will, making civil arrangements for its support, and even undertaking to inflict penalties on its supposed delinquents. Its self-government, as an incorporation of aggregated churches, involved an usurpation over individual and congregational rights, and was accompanied from time to time by the grossest acts of persecution and civil wrong. In consequence of erroneous associations connected with it, the principle of liberty of private judgment, or of individual Independency, was seldom understood aright, and never consistently carried out. Practically, it was liberty only to think and act according to the views of an ecclesias-

tical majority; and even those who echoed the cry of "The Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants!" were not unfrequently found amongst the ranks of the persecutors, either in fact or by connivance. The true connexion between civil and religious liberty was very little understood; and the Divinely indicated relations subsisting between the individual and the local church, the local church and the churches generally, or in the aggregate, and between all these and the civil powers, were scarcely known. The subject was never thoroughly investigated. The Scriptures were never studied from the right point of view in reference to it. Existing institutions and organizations were the point from which the entire question was argued; and as they were all erroneous, the great principles of religious freedom, in all their bearings, were never thoroughly comprehended.

The principal source of misconception was that which originated the defection in the early history of the church, and which still holds captive so many minds otherwise enfranchised, namely, the idea of the necessity of a visible catholicity amongst all the followers of Christ. The Romish church adhered to its ancient purpose of embracing the world in the arms of an actual unity. The Protestant churches, although their protestantism was a denegation of it, still clung to the favourite dogma, and sought to promote it in their fraction of the general whole. If all the church could not be one, at least each separate church must be one; and if there could not be actual unity in all things, there must be unity in essentials. Such were their views. They began, therefore, at the wrong end. Instead of permitting truth to operate freely in the minds of men, thereby developing its results in a living unity of

conviction and consentaneousness of religious practice; instead of waiting patiently, as nature waits, for the elaboration of fruit in the genial autumn of the year, they sought to institute the unity in the first instance, and then bring it about actually by creeds and confessions, by a system of association involving inter-dependence on the part of individuals and congregations, and by a confederation of ecclesiastical parts in a visible whole, which inverted the true order of things, and departed from the genius of the gospel. Christ had, in effect, said, through the institutions recorded in his word, "Let each individual follow ME. Let all my followers in the same locality associate freely together for true fellowship, without dictating to one another, and remembering that I am sole Master. Let all such local societies be united, as need may arise and occasion serve, yet without subordination, and without yielding up individual and congregational Independence to any general authority. Thus shall ye come to true unity, by the truth revealed, by the Spirit poured out from on high, and by the cultivation of a genuine Christian temper towards one another. Thus shall my prayer be fulfilled; and in the end of the world ye shall be matured and ripened into a perfect development: ye shall ALL be ONE." But the opposite course was followed. The end was made the starting point; and the result was, as might have been anticipated, a formal unity in every Protestant state of Europe, with real division, manifold schisms, and abundant persecution.

CHAPTER II.

CAUSES CONNECTED WITH THE REVIVAL OF INDEPENDENCY IN ENGLAND.

WHATEVER may have been the progress of religious freedom before and after the period of the Reformation, it must be admitted that the principles of Independency never met with any systematic advocacy, until the reign of Elizabeth. There may have been instances of congregational worship and government previous to that period; but this arose from peculiar circumstances, rendering such a mode of organization expedient. A number of Christians cast upon a desert island, or forced by persecution to seclude themselves from their fellow-men, would be almost compelled to act as a congregation, in the first instance. But this might be the case, without any discriminating adoption of congregational principles in contradistinction from all others; and therefore, in the course of time, the very same parties might, without inconsistency, have recourse to other and opposite forms. As we have already observed, such probably was the case in the age immediately succeeding that of Wycliffe *, and in other periods, both antecedent and subsequent. There is no existing proof, however, that such parties espoused the principles of

* See back, p. 30.

congregational Independency, as forbidding every system which had the tendency to supplant them by an extension of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction beyond the local community. Even in the church constitution of Hesse *, intended to be the pattern for the churches of the Reformation, and certainly the most liberal of all that were suggested or adopted in that age, we find the purely congregational element overborne by arrangements of a synodical and even semi-episcopal nature. In fact, up to the period we have specified, there was no intelligent recognition of the system of congregational Independency, as scripturally provided, and therefore as suited to all the possible circumstances of the Christian church. Many attempts were made to advance and extend the liberties of Christian men. Many schemes were framed to secure an adjustment between liberty of conscience and the authority of an ecclesiastical aggregate, designated the church. Many problems were entertained, and partially solved, respecting the limits of official power and personal Independency, in order to a mutual conjunction and harmony. But the Divine expedient, revealed in the primitive institutions, was never apprehended; and its simple solution of the difficulty, though completely answering all the requirements of the case, was scarcely thought of. The Divine plan of regulating the church was too simple and unassuming to be appreciated, until the proper time.

It is important to inquire into the causes of the delay which attended the discovery of the lost truth, as well as the causes of the discovery itself. The fact, unexplained, operates as an objection to the truth of

* Ibid., p. 37.

the system to which it relates, and has undoubtedly been so considered by the abettors of other views. A seeming novelty is attached to principles really ancient, unless it can be shown that there were reasons for their eclipse during a long night of darkness, as well as for their reappearing at a certain season of advancing dawn. It becomes the historian of principles, assumed to be apostolic, to show some reason for their total neglect during any very protracted period in the history of a church where, on the hypothesis, they once had paramount place, and for whose permanent guidance they were provided. In this department of his work he is bound to become the truthful advocate, if only for the purpose of showing that his narrative relating to modern periods, is only the fragment of a great whole, and that, as a fragment, it was broken off from the main entirety by causes which can be explained; just as geographers argue for the ancient continuity between our island and the continent of Europe by indicating the causes, still apparent, which might have occasioned their separation; or, as a geologist might argue for the primitive homogeneousness of the earth's crust by the very causes still in operation, sufficient in themselves to break it up into its divisions of land and water.

The point thus mooted is similar to the one so often mooted respecting Protestantism in general; and not only demands, but is capable of receiving a similar settlement. In answer to the question, Where was your religion before Luther? some have satisfied their own minds by referring to the Bible; others have gone more largely into the discussion of the subject, and have endeavoured to show that the protestant doctrine has been held in every period of the

church*; while others, without affirming or denying the last particular, have shewn that as there are traces of a gradual advancement towards protestant doctrine in the periods immediately preceding the Reformation, so there are traces of a gradual departure from protestant doctrine in the periods succeeding the age of the apostles†. It is not our present business to say which of these answers is the most correct, or whether the whole of them may not be true. We have, however, to deal with something more specific than Protestantism, and to show that it not only existed before the age of Elizabeth, but that its modern history is only a continuation of that which relates to its origin and early progress. If it can be shown, as is the case, that Independency was the order of things instituted in the first age of the church by inspired men ‡; that it was gradually departed from after their decease, yet not for some time after§; that in proportion as it was departed from, the professed church departed also into every species of doctrinal and practical error ||; that as a reaction took place, and errors were discerned, and liberty received, there was a gradual approximation towards this system once more; and that at last the long lost truth was discovered anew, and advocated as the elements of a system, and the characteristic principles of a sect, and thenceforth, notwithstanding adverse circumstances, diffused and handed down from one generation to another, reaching to

* Gilly's Waldensian Researches; Allix's Hist. of the Albigenses, &c.

† Waddington's History of the Church, pp. 354, 705, note.

‡ Vol. i. book i. of the present work.

§ Ibid. book ii. chap. ii.

|| Ibid. chap. iii. iv. v.

our own times, with fresh confirmation of its importance, in every successive period; — if this can be shown, then we think there is so much positive and cumulative evidence that the system so distinguished is Divine, and destined ultimately to prevail. So far from regarding Independency as a heresy, and the Independents as a sect, dating their origin from the sixteenth century of the Christian era; we shall be compelled to reverence the system as an essential part of Christianity itself, and its modern advocates as the honoured successors of those apostles and primitive Christians, who knew no other custom*, and followed no other rule. As the continuous existence of the sun is a truth unhesitatingly believed, notwithstanding his temporary absence during the night, because of his reappearing in the lustre of an undiminished glory; so the continuous existence of Independency, as a Divine system, is unaffected by those circumstances, in connexion with the moral revolutions of the world, which during so long a period, and to such an extent, eclipsed its light. It once shone throughout the long morning of the brightest era that ever dawned upon the world. And what if the darkness of a long and dreary night succeeded! The institutions of Moses suffered a similar neglect, and the book of the law was lost during a protracted period of corruption and idolatry. The doctrines of a greater than Moses were supplanted by monstrous errors in the bosom of a church professing to be Christian, during a yet longer period; and were cherished only by a despised and persecuted succession of outcasts, "of whom the world was not worthy," and whose history

* 1 Cor. xi. 16.

is, even to the present day, and by protestant histoaians, recorded under the head of heresy.* Such facts are only melancholy proofs of the depravity of our race, while the revival of forgotten truth is a token that God has visited us again in his mercy, in order to restore us once more to the saving influences of his own word.

When the lost book of the law was discovered in the reign of Josiah, and read before him, we are informed that "it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes, and commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for *them that are left* in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, BECAUSE OUR FATHERS HAVE NOT KEPT THE WORD OF THE LORD, to do after all that is written in this book."† Such was Josiah's view of the past neglect which had been paid to a Divine law. Instead of regarding with complacency the period when other than Divine principles prevailed in Israel, he was overwhelmed at the thought that the word of the Lord had not been kept. And for the tenderness of heart and the humiliation of spirit thereby evinced, he was exempted from the penal consequences of disobedience which ı .ched all besides.‡

* Mosheim, Waddington, &c. Is it not time that *protestant* historians, at least, should render honour to whom honour is due, by ceasing to class the witnesses and confessors of the truth under this head?

† 2 Chronicles, xxxiv. 19—21.

‡ Ibid. 23—28.

In a similar spirit, should the long reign of antichrist be regarded by all who appreciate protestant doctrine, which is no other than revived primitive truth. In a similar spirit should the departure from apostolic institutions be regarded by all who acknowledge their Divine authority. So far from deeming the long period of neglect an argument against their former prevalence, it should be considered as only another proof of the perverseness of the human race,—parallel in the history of the Christian church with that to which we have adverted in respect to the Jewish,—and demanding equal humiliation and sorrow. If, in consequence of not keeping "the words of the Lord," the errors and crimes which occupy so much space in ecclesiastical history arose, and multiplied, and perpetuated themselves from age to age, to such an extent that the name of Christianity came to be associated with the worst forms of evil; the fact ought to be deplored, as one of the greatest calamities that ever happened either to the church or the world.

It is admitted, however, that the same influence which led mankind to depart from what was primitive and Divine, may also lead some to take an erroneous view of the changes through which the professed church of Christ has passed. As in the days of Josiah the previously corrupt state of the Jewish church might have been held up as the pattern, instead of that of the days of Moses and Joshua; so now the corruptions of past centuries may be referred to as the model, instead of the simple and comparatively perfect condition of the churches in the first age. All that we can do, in order to disabuse the mind of such a perverted view of the case as this, is to refer to the records of the New Testament and of the earliest age. If con-

viction is not to be obtained thence, it can be obtained nowhere: and those who reject such evidence must be left to the "strong delusion," under which, unhappily, they have come. Where, however, conviction is, in the first instance, produced by this appeal to the only infallible guide, the history of the church affords materials for strengthening the conviction and maturing it into a state of absolute certainty.

As in a former portion of our work we have traced the gradual departure of the church into anti-christian error, deducing from the series of changes by which it was attended an argument in behalf of the view we have taken of the original state of things; so now we propose to describe the gradual return to what was lost, for the purpose of completing the argument, in so far as it may be historically deduced. If it can be shown that light gradually dawned upon the world, in a manner directly the converse of that in which it had previously declined; if it can be shown that one advance was made after another, until at length a complete or nearly complete view was acquired of the primitive doctrines and institutions of the apostolic age; then we think a degree of unity is given to the church's history which cannot otherwise be obtained, and in that unity our entire case is established. The course we thus follow becomes continuous and one. We first trace the stream from its source, where it runs pure and undisturbed, until it reaches a region where it can no longer be discerned, in consequence of the luxuriant, overshadowing growth of corruption and error; and then we perceive it emerging from this stage of its progress, until at last all its original elements reappear.

Those events which are usually regarded as predis-

posing causes of the Reformation, may also be reckoned amongst the remoter antecedents of that more essential reformation to which our subject refers. The revival of learning, the general diffusion of knowledge, the greatly increased activity of mind in speculative matters, and the circulation of the Scriptures, were all essential preparatives to more correct modes of thinking in reference to religion. The two chief pioneers, of a purely instrumental kind, were the invention of paper in the twelfth century,* and of printing in the fifteenth.† By these means the materials of knowledge were widely diffused. Not only were the universities, colleges, and grammar schools more cheaply supplied with books, but the people generally were stimulated to habits of reading by the less costly means of self-instruction thereby provided. Wherever the simple elements of learning had been communicated, a power was created which might now be exercised to any extent in self-cultivation and improvement. But the principal thing contributing to a thirst for knowledge, especially of a religious kind, was the circulation of the holy Scriptures. Long before the time of Luther there were multitudes of

* Paper made from cotton is thought to have been in use in the ninth century; but not for manuscript books, and scarcely at all in Europe. The earliest instance of the use of paper made from linen is in 1100. It was not until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that paper was much in use as an ordinary writing material. Hallan's Introduction to the Literature of Europe, vol. i. pp. 72-78.

† Block printing was common in the fourteenth century, and amongst the Chinese had been practised from time immemorial. Costar and Gutenberg divide the claim to have been the inventor of moveable type. Schæffer, however, who was a workman employed by Gutenberg, appears to have been the inventor of the method of casting metal types—without which the invention would have been of comparatively little service.

Bible readers in our own country; and although laws were enacted which condemned Wycliffe's translation,* as well as that of John de Trevisa,† to be sought out and burnt, there can be no doubt that a great number of copies escaped the flames, and became the means of secretly spreading and perpetuating a scriptural faith and worship.

The Reformation itself was a most powerful means for good; preparing the way for further and more perfect changes, quite irrespective of the immediate results attending it. It was impossible for such an agitation as that which it involved to be conducted on so large a scale, and by such prominent agents on both sides, without affecting the general character of the public mind. The lethargy of ages was broken in upon, and all classes of men were compelled to think, feel, act, in reference to matters of religious nature, as they had never done before. It was the dawn of a new era for the human race. The conflict between light and darkness then assumed, for the first time, a character of earnestness and reality. Not only were antiquated superstitions overthrown, and monstrous corruptions purged away, but the method in which these things were accomplished, was the commencement of a new system of schooling for the nations of Europe. Comparatively speaking, up to this period authority, undisputed or nearly so, had dealt out what

* Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe, vol. ii. chap. ii. Knighton said of this noble work of benevolence, "The jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the people, and what was hitherto the principal gift of the clergy and divines, is made for ever common to the laity."

† Fuller's Church Hist. of Britain, book iv. cent. xiv. sect. 43 to 45. He was a secular priest, and vicar of Berkeley.

was considered to be truth, and all that the people had to do, was to receive the instructions imparted with implicit submission. Henceforth, however, the circumstance that the world was ranged on two sides in a great religious struggle, compelled all, more or less earnestly, to inquire for themselves. Although, therefore, in the course of a few years after the commencement of the conflict, a kind of armistice was agreed upon between the contending parties;—the papists on the one hand retiring within the boundaries of a retrenched dominion, and the protestants on the other, settling themselves down as they best might, on their newly recovered territory;—yet the agitation never practically ceased. The example which had been set on so prominent a theatre could never be forgotten. The resistance offered to authority of the most powerful kind had been effectual, and encouragement was thereby given to attempt at least a similar resistance in every case of oppression. Moreover, the great principle which the Reformers had used as their potent weapon, both for attack and defence, was one which it was not difficult either to comprehend or to use in after times, and in every succeeding conflict. The Reformers of the sixteenth century, after securing their object, might depart from their great principle of liberty of private judgment, and even erect the tribunal of their own authority in the place of that which they had demolished; but other parties could not so easily forget the past. If the power of *Rome* might be successfully opposed by carrying the appeal to Scripture alone, as the only authority in matters of religion; so might the power of Wittemburgh and Geneva, and for the same reason. It was not likely that those who had cheered on the

Reformers in their conflict against authority would, for any long period, be deluded into a state of submission to the newly-acquired authority of the Reformers themselves. Under various pleas, the Lutheran and the Reformed churches might procure a partial acquiescence in their claims to dictate to the human conscience, and prescribe to the human spirit; but it would, sooner or later, become apparent, that the more thoughtful and earnest were not so willing to depart from the precedent which the conduct of the great leaders in the Reformation had set before them. So far from returning to the ancient servitude from which they had been liberated, inquiry would be directed to the question as to the best means of perpetuating the liberty secured, in harmony with the maintenance of those peculiar duties relating to order, fellowship, and worship, which Scripture seemed to impose upon all Christian men.

On inquiring into the actual state of things immediately after the Reformation, we find that the great problem, the solution of which was almost universally attempted, had reference to this latter point. Although the Reformation, as a struggle, had not come upon the world unawares, seeing that it was only the last of a series of conflicts against Roman domination; yet it must be allowed, that the Reformers, and none more so than Luther himself, were much better qualified for the work of pulling down than of building up. They did not anticipate the difficulties that would ensue upon the success of their endeavours. Regarded in this light therefore, the Reformation was a surprise; and many a painful and prolonged conflict was involved in the very victory secured. The attention of thoughtful men had, for

some time previous to the sixteenth century, been directed to the corrupt usages, superstitions, and tyrannical usurpations, connected with Romish ascendancy; and a great part of Europe was prepared to sympathise with the German liberator and his confederates, when they manfully commenced their warfare against the spiritual despotism that prevailed. But few, if any, had directed their attention to the political and ecclesiastical principles which were involved in the securing of right, and the perpetuation of liberty. The questions which respected the relation between the church and the civil power, and between liberty of private judgment, as it affected the individual, and as it affected official parties in the church, and the authority of the church at large, had never been duly considered. The consequence was, as we have intimated in a previous chapter, a series of partial and imperfect experiments, in which the fault committed by Rome in respect to an usurped authority, was repeated and confirmed. Although we are, in some measure, able to account for the fact, as we have done, it must stand out as a remarkable instance of inconsistency on the part of successful Reformers, that when they had the power in their hands of securing the liberties of Christian men, and of perpetuating the disenthralment of the Christian church from every species of bondage for ever, they should be the very parties to re-institute, under one form or another, the evil against which they had contended.

In Germany, Switzerland, and England, the result of the Reformation was, virtually, a mere transfer of authority. As far as doctrine was concerned, a great change had been effected. The lessons of the gospel

were restored to their primitive place, instead of the corruptions of priestcraft. As a necessary consequence, the mode of worship also was simplified. But while truth was exchanged for error, the authority by which that change was effected, was still inconsistent with correct views of Christian liberty and political justice. Hence much dissatisfaction arose, from time to time, at the practical results attending the great struggle for freedom. The more active thinkers amongst the people, if not the ministers of religion themselves, felt that all had not been secured which had been promised; and many an attempt was made to ascertain the reason for so manifest an imperfection. More particularly was this the case in periods of divided sentiment on religious matters; and in the bosom of minorities many pointed questions originated, respecting the justice of that authority which determined what was truth and what error, simply by means of a preponderance of numbers. That these were the results actually attending the establishment of the Lutheran and Reformed churches, is well known; and in them we perceive the elements of a wholesome agitation, preparing the way for those inquiries which led to the revival of Independency. While, on the one hand, the repetition of the error committed by Rome amongst the churches of the Reformation, led to a re-action in favour of Romish ascendancy; on the other hand, it compelled thinking minds to push their inquiries yet further in the right direction, with a view to ascertaining the true scriptural basis and defences of religious freedom.

On turning our attention to England, as the place where Independency once more arose as a revived system, it is natural to inquire if there were any cir-

cumstances in relation to the origin and progress of the Reformation here, which prepared it to become the theatre of such a revival. Nor are we disappointed. It will appear to any one acquainted with the periods to which we refer, that there were many events and causes sufficient to account for what transpired in the reign of Elizabeth. Let the following circumstances have weight in relation to this topic.

It is scarcely needful to say, that the Reformation in England, under Henry the Eighth, originated in anything but sympathy with the German and Swiss Reformers. The personal views of the monarch, which could not be accomplished so long as England was subservient to Rome, led the way to a sudden disruption. Had Henry been an ordinary man, the power of Rome would never have been resisted. It was to accomplish his own degrading objects, rather than to benefit his people, or to act in accordance with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, that he ranged himself on the side of the Reformers. The doctrines, and most of the corrupt practices of the church of Rome, were retained. Even the monasteries themselves would have been spared, but for the opposition which was feared from those who dwelt within them, and the wealth which might be transferred to the royal treasury. In a word, Henry's aim was to become the pope himself in his own dominions. That the people were prepared for such a change, was a favourable circumstance; but is no cause for astonishment. A jealousy of foreign authority had long been the characteristic of the English people. A virtual separation between England and Rome in all matters not purely ecclesiastical, had now, for some time, been a peculiar feature of the

policy of England. And, although many in the ranks of the clergy and the priesthood were unfavourable, the nation at large were prepared to forego their ecclesiastical predilections in favour of their political, and in subserviency to the will of the monarch. In addition to this it should be remembered, that, scattered amongst the people at large, were a not inconsiderable number who sympathised with the continental Reformers on religious grounds alone; most of them being the remote followers of Wycliffe and his disciples, the Lollards of a previous age. Thus the comparatively easy manner in which the Reformation was effected, may be accounted for. It becomes apparent, however, in the course of a few years, that the Reformation effected by Henry was attended by an agitation of the public mind not likely to settle itself down in such a shape as mere state policy might determine. So soon as England ranked amongst the opponents of Rome, it became the ally of the other reformed nations. A sympathy sprang up between these and the English. The influence of the continental Reformers told most powerfully upon the better protestantism of England, and gave it a more positive and well-defined form than it would otherwise have assumed. Thus a conflict was commenced between the truly protestant part of the community, and that which clung with more or less fondness to the customs and ascendancy of Rome; and although during this reign, in consequence of the state of parties, no spirit of inquiry was promoted which could be said to be in advance of that exhibited on the continent, yet the first step was taken in a series of changes likely to issue, some future day, in important practical results.

In the reign of Edward the Sixth we perceive a further advance of the principles of the Reformation, in matters more purely religious. The work which Henry had commenced on political grounds, was now conducted more entirely on ecclesiastical grounds. Many things which had been left unreformed in a previous reign, were now corrected, and matters of doctrine were settled on a more scriptural basis, according to protestant principles. The monarch himself, probably, had a religious desire to do that which was right, so far as his own convictions carried him, and Archbishop Cranmer evinced an anxiety to complete that which had been so imperfectly accomplished under his former master. Had the reign of Edward been more protracted, and had it not been succeeded by that of Mary, it is probable that the protestant element of the church of England would have been more simple, and more in accordance with that of the other reformed churches, than was actually the case. At the same time, even under this reign, the principle of persecution was fearfully admitted,* as essential to the church's existence and prosperity; and many intrepid spirits were led not only to doubt, but also to remonstrate, against the justice of legislating for conscience in matters of religion. Many parties in the State were anxiously inquiring as to the scriptural principles by which the church of Christ should be guided in the promotion of its own interests; to which the circulation of the scriptures in the latter part of Edward's reign afforded increased stimulus. On the whole, therefore, the general tendency of

* For example, Joan Boucher, whom Cranmer burnt for heresy, notwithstanding the reluctance of Edward to sanction the crime. See Hallam's Constitutional Hist. of England, vol. i. pp. 131, 132.

those events which happened at this period was in favour of a better order of things.

The reign of Mary witnessed a complete reversal, suddenly effected, of all that had been done in the previous reigns. England was again at the feet of Rome as her ecclesiastical vassal. The pope and his emissaries were once more the recognised masters of the English mind. Persecution lighted up her fires and exercised her tortures. Everything protestant was rooted up, and as far as possible destroyed. Those "of whom the world was not worthy," were again compelled to retire from observation in obscure retreats, and "in caves and dens of the earth." A period of gloom and darkness, irradiated only here and there by that light which shone in secret, and which was visible only to the eye of Omniscienee, took the place of the former state of things. To judge from outward appearance the hopes of England were gone for ever; and the sad reverse which happened seemed likely to discourage all future attempts at reformation. We shall greatly err, however, if we take this superficial view of matters. Following, as it did, two reigns in which protestantism had triumphed by means of political power alone, it taught the whole nation one great lesson at least, namely, that if religion is to be dependent upon the authority of the monarch for its character and its permanency, there is no hope for mankind. But, in addition to this, those parties who flocked to the continent* in order to avoid persecution and martyrdom, were brought into contact with more thorough Reformers than any that had publicly appeared in England, and were, in

* Strype (iii. 107) reckons the emigrants at 800, and amongst these the Duchess of Suffolk, first cousin of the Queen.

many instances at least, prepared in exile to listen to the instructions of those who befriended them with special candour, and to examine the entire question of ecclesiastical polity, as they would never otherwise have done. At Geneva, Frankfort, Zurich, Strasburg, and elsewhere, they were led to discuss matters of doctrine and of discipline with new attention and with more exclusive deference to the authority of the scriptures than they would have shown in their own country, if the successor of Edward the Sixth had been a protestant instead of a papist. They could not but reflect often and deeply upon that mode of settling the religion of a nation, which had terminated in so disastrous a manner for themselves and the cause of truth. Moreover, while these refugees were imbibing new views respecting religious liberty on the continent, many less timorous, or less favoured, remained behind in England, who, in their secret meetings, not only sought to worship God according to what they conceived to be the directions of his word, but were led to carry on many thoughtful inquiries respecting the manner in which that word prescribed for the maintenance of religion and for the organization of Christ's church.

Special notice must here be taken of certain circumstances which transpired at Frankfort, inasmuch as on that ground a party contest was protracted, in which something more than mere protestantism was involved. The two parties who afterwards divided the English nation, were not only represented, but may be said to have had their origin, in the troubles of this place;* while the unsatisfactory issue of the struggle

* Such, at least, is Fuller's view of this strife: "We will be somewhat large," he writes, "and wholly impartial, in relating this

naturally led to those deeper inquiries respecting the fundamental principles of church polity, which favoured the revival of the primitive system.* The first settlers at Frankfort, in 1554, obtained from the magistrates of that city the use of the French church, on condition that they "should not dissent from the Frenchmen in doctrines or ceremonies, and that they should approve and subscribe the same confession of faith that the Frenchmen had then presented, and were about to put into print."* This condition, however, was afterwards allowed to bear such a construction, that a compromise was effected. The English order, according to Edward the Sixth's Service Book, was adopted, with some omissions and alterations; a minister and deacons were chosen to serve for a time; and letters were addressed to their brethren in Strasburgh, Zurich, Densburgh, and Emden, inviting them to remove to Frankfort, to participate in their privileges. This invitation was given in the hope of their being able to agree in the institution of a permanent discipline. "Let us all mark," said the letter, referring to the language of the apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, "that he saith not that God hath left the scriptures only, that every one should read them, but also, that he hath erected a policy and order, that there should be some to teach, and not for one day, but all the time of our life."†

sorrowful accident; the rather, because the penknives of that age were grown into swords in ours, and their writings laid the foundations of the fightings now-a-days."—Church Hist. of Britain, book viii. cent. xvi. § 42, 43.

* History of the Troubles at Frankfort. Reprint from the black letter edition of 1575, p. 6.

† Ibid. p. 12.

A correspondence ensued, which terminated in a refusal to comply with the invitation, on various grounds. The Strasburgh brethren in particular, required the use of King Edward's service book; the reason advanced being, "lest by much altering of the same, we should seem to condemn the chief authors thereof, who, as they now suffer, so are they most ready to confirm that fact with the price of their blood, and should also both give occasion to our adversaries to accuse our doctrine of imperfection, and us of unstability, and the godly to doubt of that truth wherein before they were persuaded, and to hinder their coming hither, which before they had purposed."* Eventually a service was adopted which was taken in part from the Geneva, and in part from the English service book; and the afterwards celebrated John Knox was chosen as their minister. This order of service, however, was only temporary; and all disputes which might arise meanwhile, were appointed to be referred to some of the most eminent reformers of the day.† Great harmony ensued, which would probably have continued, but for the arrival of Dr. Richard Cox,‡ and other exiles from England, who seemed bent upon enforcing the English service upon the congregation, in opposition to the determination of the church. From this period a series of divisions and painful contentions arose. Dr. Cox's party managed, in the end, to procure the expulsion of Knox, in a most ungenerous manner. Soon after the accession of Mary, Knox had written a book entitled,

* History of the Troubles of Frankfort, p. 23.

† Calvin, Musculus, Martyr, Bullinger, and Vyret.

‡ Cox had been tutor to Edward the Sixth.

"An Admonition to Christians," in which he reflected on the conduct of the emperor, as a supporter of popery. This book was presented by Dr. Cox's party to the magistrates, as a proof of his treasonable disposition. The magistrates entertained a high respect for Knox's friends, and discerned the baseness of the charge; but being subjects of the emperor, they were compelled to notice it; and therefore to shield him from evil consequences, advised him to leave the city. Knox prudently acted upon the advice, and retired to Geneva. Although, however, the party who were so enamoured of their English service book, had got rid of their chief opponent, there were many others, and amongst the rest, Whittingham, who were prepared to take up the quarrel. The contention continued, and the two parties at last separated, the friends of Knox following him to Geneva. At the death of Mary, Cox and the rest returned to England, to continue a similar struggle there, only, under greater favour from the civil power, and not without substantial recompense. He and some of his associates were made bishops under Elizabeth, and persecuted the puritans in England with more effect than they had been able to do in Frankfort.*

We refer to these events not so much on account of any interest which the reader might take in the case itself, as for the purpose of showing on a small scale the working of principles of an opposite kind amongst the protestants of that day. In King Edward's reign a division, more or less similar, existed, in consequence of the twofold origin of the Reforma-

* Cox afterwards came under the Queen's displeasure for covetous practices.—Fuller's Church Hist. of Britain, book iv. cent. xvi. § 28—34.

tion in this country. Even then, the party which sided with the monarch, and which viewed the Reformation in a political light, were found ranked among the friends of formalism and ceremonial, semi-popish rites, ecclesiastical subordination of ranks, and whatever else might connect Christianity with a worldly show of things. Those, however, who regarded the Reformation in a religious point of view, and who made the scriptures their practical rule of faith and worship, were found favouring a more simple mode of worship, in which mere ceremony was important only as tending to "decency and order;" and advocated a system of ecclesiastical government in which the Christian people were allowed to exercise some degree of religious liberty. The truly religious party, however, had never been placed in circumstances favourable to their principles and aims during the reign of Edward. The political element was at that time more powerful than the ecclesiastical. As in a previous reign, the truly religious were, if not in a minority as to numbers, yet virtually so, in consequence of their want of influence at court. The result was, that the abettors of a formal religion had an advantage which made them proud and contemptuous, as well as assuming, towards those who were more worthy. That this was the case is evinced by the relative position of the two parties at Frankfort. Both of them were English; but they brought with them very much of the relative feeling in respect to one another, which had characterised them previously in their own country. While Knox, Whittingham, and the rest had all the advantage of more enlightened religious principles, and even in point of numbers were much superior to their opponents, they

seemed to pay them a kind of hereditary deference, greatly disproportioned to the just demands of the case. Dr. Cox and his party on the other hand, seemed to forget that they had crossed the seas and entered upon a neutral territory; and whilst pursuing a most unjust line of conduct towards the congregation which had admitted them to its number in so charitable a manner, seemed to act with as much assumption as if they thought they were still backed by the court of Edward and the dignitaries of a church now annihilated. Thinking men, however, would draw from this example just inferences in respect to the unfair manner in which ascendancy might be gained over truth and justice by petty manœuvring and pretence. They would be led to see, that even on neutral ground it was possible for erroneous principles to become established over just and scriptural ones, wherever the liberties of a Christian people were not shielded and protected by something more than the absence of persecution and even the favour of the magistracy. In a word, the tendency of those events which happened at Frankfort, of which so many parties were interested spectators, would be to lead the minds of men into a further inquiry respecting the true scriptural basis of freedom for Christ's people, as discovered in the principles of the church's constitution. All this was favourable towards a revival of the great principles of individual and congregational Independency.

On the whole then, it was not surprising, that in the reign of Elizabeth there should be, on the part of many, a disposition to enter upon that peculiar line of investigation which led to Brownism in the first instance, and afterwards to a more perfect

comprehension of the apostolic institutions in reference to church organization. To us, looking back upon the past, and seeing how nearly men in different periods came up to right views in respect to this matter, it appears at the first sight strange, that for so long a time they failed to arrive at them. But we are reminded of other cases, in which similar approximations to important discoveries have been made, which were, nevertheless, approximations only. The invention of printing was often all but discovered before the time of Schæffer. The idea of a new world sometimes engaged the thoughts of men before its discovery by Columbus. The practical appliance of steam power, for the purposes of locomotion, was often approximated in a series of experiments, before it was actually effected. The theory of gravitation, and the discovery of the harmonies of the solar system, often tempted the speculative mind to entertain them, before the age of Newton. In reference to all these matters of invention or discovery, it may often seem strange to us now, that the world was so slow in lighting upon them. So in relation to the revival of Independency. The age and the hour were both fixed, in the purpose of Him who controls the events of time, and directs the human mind in all those processes of inquiry which lead to important results affecting the destinies of men and the interests of His church. All that we can do, historically, is to trace those antecedents in the actual history of the race which usher in important discoveries, whether in the department of science, art, or revealed truth, and to point out the precise period of discovery itself. Before we proceed to this point, however, we must take notice

of an opinion which seems to run somewhat counter to the views we have advanced, in relation to the period in which Independency revived in this country.

It has been affirmed that there were Independents before the time of Elizabeth, distinguished by their principles and proceedings from all other religious parties.* It becomes us, therefore, to adduce and examine the testimony relied on as evidence of the fact, lest we should be chargeable with post-dating the revival of Independency in our country. The language of Penry, of whom we shall hear more shortly, is advanced in favour of this opinion. In a paper dated Edinburgh, April 30th, 1593, he tells Queen Elizabeth, that "in all likelihood, if the days of your sister, Queen Mary, and her persecution, had continued until this day, the church of God in England had been far more flourishing than at this day it is." † And again, in another place he writes, "It is well known that there were then in London, under the burden, and elsewhere in exile, more flourishing churches than any now tolerated by your authority." ‡ To this general statement a more particular reference is added, respecting some actual congregations which

* "There were Independents when there were Lollards, when there were Puritans, when there were Nonconformists. They were not bound up with any of these, whether considered as sects of Christian communion, or as indexes of current belief. The congregational organization went on, whatever might be the vicissitudes around it. Others debated the question of establishments: it is scarcely necessary to say, that Independency always opposed them, being incompatible with them."—Sermons by R. W. Hamilton, D.D., second series, p. 635.

† Pagitt's Heresiography, in Hanbury's Historical Memorials, relating to the Independents, vol. i. p. 15.

‡ Ibid.

had their existence in different parts of England, more especially in Norfolk, Suffolk, and London. Fox, the martyrologist, informs us of a congregation, consisting of about thirty members, that met in a house in Bow churchyard, and of their being surprised on New Year's day, 1555-6, and afterwards committed to prison. Their minister, Mr. Rose, was committed to the Tower, two days after, by the Bishop of Winchester, who was at that time Lord Chancellor.* The same author informs us of another congregation that met in Islington, at the Saracen's Head. Mr. John Rough, who first joined himself to them in November, 1557, became their chosen minister, and a person of the name of Cuthbert Simpson was elected to the office of deacon. In December of the same year, at the suggestion of one of their number who acted the part of a Judas amongst them, they were surprised by the Vice-Chamberlain of the Queen's household, and both minister and deacon were burnt alive.† In addition to these statements the words of Sir Walter Raleigh in his speech in Parliament in April, 1580, are adduced for the purpose of indicating how far certain principles obnoxious to the established clergy had spread over England at that early period. "In my conceit," said the courtier and statesman, "the Brownists are worthy to be rooted out of the commonwealth; but what danger may grow to *ourselves* if this law pass, it were fit to be considered. For it is to be feared that men *not guilty* will be involved in it. . . . . If two or three thousand Brownists meet at the sea, at whose charge shall they be transported,

* Acts and Monuments, vol. iii. p. 114.

† Ibid. pp. 860—864.

or whither will you send them? I am sorry for it, I am afraid there are near twenty thousand of them in *England*, and when they be gone, who shall maintain their wives and children?" *

From this last statement it is inferred, that before the time of Browne there must have been at work in the public mind a considerable leaven of principles essentially identical with his. Sir Walter, however, may have used an obnoxious name, without much discrimination, for the purpose of stigmatizing the parties who had most openly separated themselves from the established church. With respect to the other statements, it must be admitted that in themselves they do not contain sufficiently positive evidence of the point to be proved. All that can be justly inferred is, that in Queen Mary's days, and in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's, there were congregations holding their meetings separately, and, in some measure, following apostolic precedent in respect to the functions of church officers, and their election by the members of the congregation. Before we are entitled to affirm that those congregations understood and acted upon independent principles, recognised as such in their exclusive character, we must know more respecting them than has come down to us. It might be that the secresy with which they were compelled to act, arising from the persecution to which they were exposed, reduced them to the congregational system as the only alternative. It might be that under other circumstances the very same parties would have acted in another way inconsistent with congregational principles strictly so termed. The reasoning we have already

* D'Ewes Journal, p. 517.

urged holds good here. The Lollards were accustomed to hold their separate meetings for fellowship and worship in the age of Wycliffe; but, probably, because no other course was open to them. The church at Frankfort, to which we referred in the last chapter, was in fact a congregational church, self-governed and separate from all others; but the principles maintained by the members of that church were in no period strictly congregational. If Knox and his party had had the opportunity, they would have connected the church with a presbyterian and extra congregational system. Cox and his party, on the other hand, had occasion offered, would have brought the congregation under the superintendence of a diocesan episcopate. Similar remarks may be made with respect to many, if not most of the congregations composed of English exiles on the Continent. We conclude, therefore,—without affirming that it was so,—that the various congregations in England, in Queen Mary's days and in the early part of the reign of Elizabeth, might have been the result of expediency rather than principle. Neither should we forget the testimony of Robinson, who lived only a few years after,—and who certainly understood what congregational Independency was,—in respect to these very parties. "That which they add," he observes, "of 'sundry secret congregations in Queen Mary's days, in many parts of the land,' is but a boast. There were very few of them in any. But where they say, that these 'did upon Queen Elizabeth's entrance openly profess the gospel,' it is untrue; there was not one congregation separated in Queen Mary's days, that so remained in Queen Elizabeth's. The congregations were dissolved, and the people in them

bestrewed themselves in their several parishes where their livings and estates lay. The circumcised were mingled with the uncircumcised; whence came that monstrous confusion against which we witness. And show me one of your ministers continuing his charge in Queen Elizabeth's days, over the flock to which he ministered in Queen Mary's days, the persecuted gospel? "It is certain the congregations, whether many or few, were all dispersed; and that the members of them joined themselves to the profane apostate papists, where their outward occasions lay. As, then, a handful or bundle of corn shuffled into a field of weeds, though in itself it retain the same nature, yet cannot make the field a corn field; so neither could this small handful of separated people in Queen Mary's days sanctify the whole field of the idolatrous and profane multitude in the land, by their scattering themselves amongst them." *

Putting all these facts together, we think the evidence is not sufficient to prove that Independent principles were in any case acted upon, as the basis of that congregational worship which certainly prevailed. There *may*, however, have been individuals who deduced those principles in private from the writings of the New Testament; and there certainly was a preparedness of mind, on the part of a large number, for the reception of such principles, whenever they might be first expounded. Amongst the puritans there were various degrees of conviction, and a considerable amount of mutual toleration, in respect to what the scriptures were supposed to teach, both as to doc-

* Robinson's Justification of Separation, 1610, p. 460. Hanbury, i. 16, 17.

trine and polity.* It was then, as now, an observable fact, that great differences existed as to the grounds on which the established religion was opposed. Some were moved by scruples only, others by principle. Some objected to canonical habits, and other matters of mere ceremonial; others objected to the absence of discipline, and the multiplication of offices and orders. One party thought it inexpedient that so much of the popish system should be retained; while another party deemed it essential that the church should be ordered and governed according to the apostolic pattern. Thus a great diversity of opinion characterised those who were generally classed under the general designation of puritans; and the prevailing temper of the times was such as to lead men to yet further inquiry respecting the true basis of the church's constitution and organization. Moreover, the circumstance that Elizabeth was as intolerant towards those who differed from the established protestant religion, as Mary had been towards those who rejected popery,† would naturally lead men to think that the true principle of religious freedom had not yet been discovered; and many began to ask themselves whether it was essential to the perpetuity and prosperity of Christianity, that its claims should be adjusted in subordination to those of the state.

* Price's Hist. of Protestant Nonconformity, chap. viii. vol. i. pp. 197—203.

† The number of those who suffered for religion in Mary's reign has been variously estimated. Grindal calculates it at 800 in the first two years of the persecution, Fox at 284, and Strype at 288, besides those "that died of famine in sundry prisons." Lord Burleigh, or Burghley, says, in his book entitled The Executions for Treason, "Four hundred persons suffered publicly in Queen Mary's days, besides those who were secretly murdered in prison."

When the fires of persecution, and the severities of imprisonment for conscience sake, became associated in the minds of the people with a dominant protestantism, men would not be long in coming to the conclusion that the evil most to be deprecated, inasmuch as it led nearly to all the rest, was the connexion between church and state.* Thus, political as well as ecclesiastical circumstances impelled the human mind onwards in its inquiries after truth.

In corroboration of these views, we refer to the recorded examination of those who were brought up for trial on various charges relating to ecclesiastical disobedience. The spirit and temper of the judicial inquisitors, on the one hand, and the fearless exposition of the sentiments of the prisoners, on the other, develope a state of unsettledness in the public mind favourable to the growth of inquiry. The examination of Mr. White, a citizen of London, who had been imprisoned for not frequenting his parish church, is a memorable instance. His examiners were the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, the Master of the Requests, the Dean of Westminster, the Sheriff of London, and the Clerk of the Peace. On the 18th of January, 1573, he was introduced to court, and the examination was as follows:—

Lord Chief Justice.—Who is this?

White.—White, an't please your honor.

Lord Chief Justice.—White, as black as the devil!

White.—Not so, my lord; one of God's children.

Lord Chief Justice.—Why will you not come to your parish church?

* The first sufferers in Elizabeth's time were the Dutch Baptists, John Wielmacher and Hendrick Ter Woort, who were burned in Smithfield, July 22, 1575.

White.—My Lord, it is my desire to frequent the places of preaching and prayer: neither did I refuse my parish church, for I did not only frequent the same, but also procured diverse godly men there to preach; and as I said when I was last before you, since my last troubles about these matters, I was never absent from my parish church, being at home, in health, and at liberty.

Mr. Gerard.—You have not usually frequented your own parish.

White.—I grant I have more used other places, where I was better edified.

Gerard.—Will you come to your parish to hear prayer, though there be no preaching?

White.—I crave the liberty of a subject; and if I do not publicly use both preaching, and prayer, and sacraments, and behave myself as a Christian, deal with me accordingly.

Master of the Rolls.—Nay, you must answer yea, or no.

White.—You know my mind. I would avoid those things which be a grief to me, an offence to others, and the only disturbance of the quiet state of our church.

Dean of Westminster.—What one thing can you find fault with in the common book?

White.—Let them answer that to whom it more appertaineth, for being in prison almost a whole year about these matters, I was, notwithstanding, upon a statute touching that book indicted, and before I came to liberty almost outlawed.

Lord Chief Justice.—Thou art a contemptuous fellow and wilt obey no laws.

White.—Not so, my lord; I do and will obey laws,

and therefore refusing but a ceremony of conscience, and not refusing the penalty for the same, I rest still a true subject.

Lord Chief Justice.—The Queen's Majesty was evil overseen that you were not made of counsel, how to make laws and orders for religion.

White.—Not so, my lord; I am to obey laws and orders warranted by God's word.

Lord Chief Justice.—Do the Queen's laws command anything against God's word?

White.—I do not say so, my lord.

Lord Chief Justice.—Yes, marry do you; and there I will hold you, by your leave.

White.—Only God and his laws be absolute and perfect; all men and their laws may err.

Lord Chief Justice.—This is one of Shaw's darlings; I will tell thee what, I will not speak anything of affection, for I know thee not, saving by this occasion; thou art the wickedest and most contemptuous person that came before me since I sat in this commission.

White.—Not so, my lord; my conscience doth witness with me otherwise.

Master of the Requests.—What if the Queen should command to wear a grey frieze gown, would you come to the church then?

White.—That were more tolerable than that God's ministers should wear the habit of his enemy.

Lord Chief Justice.—How, if she should command to wear a fool's coat and a cock's-comb.

White.—That were very unseemly, my lord, for God's ministers.

Dean of Westminster.—You will not be obedient to the Queen's proceedings.

White.—I am and will be obedient.

Lord Chief Justice.—Yea, you say so; but how are you obedient when you will not do that she commandeth?

White.—I have said I would avoid only those things which have no warrant in God's word, and are either condemned or written against by the best reformed churches. Neither are they within the compass of St. Paul's rule, to serve for order, peace, comeliness, and edification, but the flat contrary.

Lord Chief Justice.—He would have no laws.

White.—If there were no laws, I hope I would live like a Christian.

Lord Chief Justice.—Thou art a rebel.

White.—Not so, my lord; a true subject.

Lord Chief Justice.—Yea, I swear by God, thou art a very rebel, for I see thou wouldest draw thy sword, and lift up thy hand, and wouldest arise to rebel against thy prince if time served.

White.—My lord, I thank God my heart standeth right toward God and my prince, and God will not condemn, though your honor hath so judged.

Lord Chief Justice.—Take him away.

White.—I would speak a word, which I am sure will offend, and yet I must speak it. I heard the name of God taken in vain; if I had done it, it had been a greater offence than that I stand here for.

Gerard.—White, White, you do not behave yourself well.

White.—I crave your worship show me wherein, and I will crave pardon and amend it.

Lord Chief Justice.—I may swear in a matter of charity.

White.—There is now no such occasion. . . . . .

But forasmuch as I am so charged, and that it is bruited that at my last being before you I did deny the supremacy of my prince, I desire your honors and worships, with all that be present, to bear witness that I acknowledge her Majesty the chief governor next under Christ, over all persons and causes within her dominions, and to this I will subscribe. . . . . I acknowledge the substance of doctrine and sacraments to be sound and sincere; and so I do of rites and ceremonies, as they agree with the word of God.

Lord Chief Justice.—The best in England shall understand of you. Take him away.

White.—My lord, I would to the Lord Jesus my committing to prison these two years might procure these matters to be indifferently conferred upon and decided by God's word, and the judgment of other reformed churches.

Lord Chief Justice.—You shall be committed, I warrant you.

White.—I pray you, my lord, let me have justice. I am, as I have said, unjustly presented, and I know the jury did not so present me, but that it is done by the malice of some; wherefore I desire to have a copy thereof.

Lord Chief Justice.—You shall have your head from your shoulders; have him to the Gate-house!

White.—I pray you, commit me to some prison in London, that I may be near my house.

Lord Chief Justice.—No, sir, you shall go thither.

White.—I have paid fines and fees in other prisons; send me not where I shall pay the like again.

Lord Chief Justice.—Yes, marry shall you; that is your glory.

White.—I desire no such glory.

Lord Chief Justice.—It will cost you twenty pounds, I warrant you, before you come out.

White.—God's will be done!

"Thus," says this persecuted man, "I was had to the Gate-house." *

Another example,—in which a more complete development is afforded of the respect which the puritans paid to Scripture, and what they conceived to be the truth,—is to be found in the case of Mr. Axton, a year or two before the last. Mr. Axton was the minister of Morton Corbet, in Leicestershire, and was cited into the bishop's court three times in the year 1570. The closing part of the examination was as follows:—

Bishop.—Now, *Mr. Axton*, I would know of you, what you think of the callings of the bishops of *England?*

Axton.—I may fall into danger by answering this question.

Bishop.—I may compel you to answer upon your oath.

Axton.—But I may choose whether I will answer upon oath or not. I am not bound to bring myself into danger; but because I am persuaded it will redound to God's glory, I will speak, be the consequence what it will; and I trust in the *Holy Spirit*, that I shall be willing to die in defence of the truth.

Bishop.—Well, what do you think of my calling?

Axton.—You are not lawfully called to be a bishop, *according to the Word of God.*

Bishop.—I thought so; but why?

* M.S. p. 176—178. Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, vol. i. pp. 285—287.

Axton.—For three causes; 1st. Because you were not ordained by the consent of the *eldership.*

Bishop.—But I had the hands of three or four bishops!

Axton.—But that is not the eldership *St. Paul* speaks of, 1 Tim. iv. 14.

Bishop.—By what eldership were you ordained? was it not by a bishop?

Axton.—I had, indeed, the laying on of the hands of one of the bishops of *England,* but that was the least part of my calling.

Bishop.—What calling had you more?

Axton.—I having *exercised* and expounded the *Word* several times in an ordinary assembly of ten ministers; they joined in prayer, and being required to speak their consciences in the presence of God, declared, upon the trial they had of me, that they were persuaded I might become a profitable labourer in the house of God; after which I received the laying on the hands of the bishop.

Bishop.—But you had not the laying on of the hands of those preachers.

Axton.—No; I had the substance, but I wanted the accident, wherein I beseech the Lord to be merciful to me; for the laying on of hands, as it is the *word,* so it is agreeable with the mighty action of ordaining the ministers of God.

Bishop.—Well, then, your ordination is imperfect, as well as mine. What is your second reason?

Axton.—Because you are not ordained bishop over any *one* flock; nay, you are not a pastor over any one congregation, contrary to 1 Pet. v. 2, *Feed the flock;* and to Acts xiv. 23, from whence it is manifest, that

there should be bishops and elders through every congregation.

Bishop.—What is a congregation?

Axton.—Not a whole diocese, but such a number of people as ordinarily assemble in one place to hear the Word of God.

Bishop.—What, if you had a parish six or seven miles long, where many could not come to hear once in a quarter of a year?

Axton.—I would not be a pastor over such a flock.

Bishop.—What is your third reason?

Axton.—Because you are not chosen by the people, Acts xiv. 23, *And they ordained elders by election in every church*, χειροτονήσαντες, *by the lifting up of* hands.

Bishop's Chancellor.—How came you to be parson of *Morton Corbet?*

Axton.—I am no *parson.*

Chancellor.—Are you, then, *vicar?*

Axton.—No; I am no vicar; I abhor those names as anti-christian; I am pastor of the congregation there.

Chancellor.—Are you neither *parson* nor *vicar?* How hold you your living?

Axton.—I receive these temporal things of the people, because I, being their pastor, do minister to them spiritual things.

Chancellor.—If you are neither *parson* nor *vicar*, you must reap no profit.

Axton.—Do you mean good faith in that you say?

Chancellor.—Yea, if you will be neither parson nor vicar, there is good cause why another should.

Bishop.—You must understand, that all livings in

the church are given to ministers as *parsons* and *vicars*, and not as *pastors* and *ministers*. How were you chosen pastor?

Axton.—By the free election of the people, and leave of the patron. After I had preached about six weeks, by way of approbation, I was chosen by one consent of them all; a sermon being preached by one of my brethren, setting forth the mutual duties of pastor and people.

Bishop.—May the bishops of *England* ordain ministers?

Axton.—You ought not to do it in the manner ye do; that is, without the consent of the eldership, without sufficient proof of their qualifications, and without ordaining them to a particular congregation.

Bishop.—Well, *Mr. Axton*, you must yield somewhat to me, and I will yield somewhat to you. I will not trouble you for the *cross in baptism*, and if you will wear the *surplice* but sometimes, it shall suffice.

Axton.—I cannot consent to wear the surplice; it is against my conscience. I trust, by the help of God, I shall never put on that *sleeve* which is a mark of the beast.

Bishop.—Will you leave your flock for the surplice?

Axton.—Nay, will you persecute me from my flock for a surplice? I love my flock in Jesus Christ, and had rather have my right arm cut off than be removed from them.

Bishop.—Well, I will not deprive you this time.

Axton.—I beseech you consider what you do in removing me from my flock, seeing I am not come in

at the window, or by simony, but according to the institution of Jesus Christ."*

It is apparent that the views of many parties in that day were verging very fast towards Independency. If we mistake not, there were only two, or at most, three points, on which the puritans needed further enlightenment, in order to their arriving at a truly scriptural position. The first of these related to the connexion between church and state; the second to the connexion between one church and another; and the third, to the teaching of the New Testament in respect to the order of officers in the church itself. The answers of Mr. Axton shew that whilst, in the main, his views respecting the independency of Christ's people and ministers were correct, he had not that settled conviction respecting some matters of detail, which a more advanced period would bring to light. But the way was evidently prepared. In due time the providence of God raised up instruments by whom the simplicity and suitableness of those principles which were involved in primitive apostolic institutions, should be rendered apparent.

* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, 1754, vol. i. p, 171—173.

CHAPTER III.

THE EARLY INDEPENDENTS; OR, THE BROWNISTS AND BARROWISTS.

THE first person associated with the revival of Independency in England, is one who for a long time gave his name to those who advocated it, and whose alleged character has been the source of many unjust reflections on the system itself. If Browne were in every respect the man he has been supposed to be, no just argument could be drawn from such a fact against the principles he espoused. It must be admitted, that the discovery and able enforcement of truth are not unfrequently associated with much imperfection in the character of the mere discoverer and advocate. There may be in some minds a tendency to disparage even a good cause when it is sustained by men of small reputation. But such a mode of reasoning will scarcely be admitted by those who know how to discriminate between things that differ. The truth of the gospel, as proclaimed by the apostles, was in no way affected by the traitorous conduct of Judas; neither would it have been so, if the entire body of the apostles had followed his example. In every age of the church there have been truthful advocates, who nevertheless were very inconsistent men. If, therefore, we were to regard the character of Browne wholly in the same light as his enemies, we should neverthe-

less be prepared to test his opinions by something better than such a standard; the more especially as they purported to be drawn from the Divine Word. We hesitate, however, to admit all that has been alleged against him, and certainly are inclined to make that abatement which is due to the fact, that whatever is discreditable in his history has been advanced by his avowed opponents. But let us turn to the life, remarkable and eventful as it was, of Robert Browne himself, in order to judge more accurately respecting this matter.

He was descended from an ancient and respectable family in Tolethorp, in Rutlandshire, and was related to the lord treasurer Burghley. His grandfather, Francis Browne, had been in high favour with Henry the Eighth, and for some particular service rendered to that monarch had a charter granted to him in the eighteenth year of his reign, confirmed by act of parliament, which gave him "leave to put on his cap in the presence of the king, or his heirs, or any lord spiritual or temporal in the land, and not to put it off, but for his own ease or pleasure." * This circumstance may seem trivial, were it not that it throws light upon the family connexions and associations of Browne's ancestors. As Fuller informs us, it was "an ancient and worshipful family." Intimately connected with the court-party, we can imagine how everything at Tolethorpe would be so squared as to be acceptable with the reigning and ruling party of the day. And if,—as there is reason to believe,—Christopher Browne, the father, inherited the tastes, and was anxious to perpetuate the connexions of the

* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. § 2.

grandfather; it is easy to conceive how improbable it was that Robert Browne would meet with anything like fair and friendly treatment, in the event of his associating himself with a party obnoxious to dignitaries in the church, and those who were greatly swayed by their influence at court. This is a point which must not be overlooked in relation to Browne's after history. He was educated in Corpus Cristi, or Bene't College, Cambridge; and, although Fuller questions whether he was "ever a graduate therein," there can be no doubt of his natural ability and proficiency, since he was master of the Free School, St. Olaves, Southwark; chaplain to the Duke of Norfolk; a popular speaker, and a nervous writer.

Little is known respecting his Cambridge life, excepting, that he became an acceptable preacher at Bene't church. The author from whom we have already quoted says, in reference to his preaching, that "the vehemence of his utterance passed for zeal among the common people; and made the vulgar to admire, the wise to suspect him." He also adds, "Dr. Still, afterwards master of Trinity (out of curiosity, or casually present at his preaching), discovered in him something extraordinary, which he presaged would prove the disturbance of the church, if not seasonably prevented." * Probably this "something extraordinary" was an after discovery of the venerable Dr. Still's, which would never have been made, but for the prominent and obnoxious part which Browne afterwards took in relation to the established religion of the day. Such reminiscences are not uncommon in connexion with parties against whom strong prejudices are enter-

* Ibid.

tained. Fuller himself tells us that, when he was a mere youth, he had seen Browne, and, having conceived a natural horror of him, indulges himself in the following recollection:—"He was of an imperious nature; offended, if what he affirmed but in common discourse were not instantly received as an oracle. He was then so far from the sabbatarian strictness to which some preciser Brownists did afterwards pretend, that both in judgment and practice he seemed rather libertine therein."* That is, he regarded Browne as a somewhat dogmatical old man, only rather free from the sanctimoniousness which he had expected to meet with in one whom he considered as an ultra puritan.

The public life of Browne, which commenced when he was somewhat young, introduced him to circumstances of a trying nature to one of his ardent temperament. The measures enacted by Queen Elizabeth for the enforcement of uniformity,† which were vigorously seconded by Archbishop Parker,‡ were anything but favourably received. Great numbers of ministers

* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent xvi. § 3—7.

† Elizabeth was proclaimed on the 17th of November, 1588. At first she acted with great caution in the ecclesiastical changes projected. Preaching, however, was prohibited the next month after her accession. In 1599 the Act establishing her ecclesiastical supremacy was passed, as well as the Act of Uniformity, which restored King Edward's service-book and first liturgy. From this time the heaviest fines and penalties were incurred by all who used any other mode of approaching God than that provided by the Book of Common Prayer. In the convocation of 1562—3 the thirty-nine articles were agreed upon. Elizabeth wrote to Parker in 1564—5, commanding him to enforce uniformity in concurrence with his brethren in the commission for that purpose, which was complied with most scrupulously.

‡ Parker had seceded from Rome, and retained the ferocity of an inquisitor.

were ejected from their livings on refusing to conform;* and the consequence was, that the more consistent amongst the puritans were compelled to separate themselves from the established church. In 1556, in consequence of the numerous publications which issued from the press, and which made a powerful impression upon the public mind in favour of the persecuted party, the liberty of the press was restrained. Power was given to the wardens of the Stationers' Company to search all suspected places, and to open all packages; and all stationers, printers, and others, trading in books, were required to enter into recognizances truly to observe the decree of the Star Chamber to that effect.† Such violent measures separated the two parties yet more; and although the separatists were under the necessity of acting secretly, and were somewhat divided amongst themselves, yet they increased in strength. A re-action took place, the reverse of that which the public measures were intended to produce. Not only did Cartwright and others advocate the boldest measures of reform,‡ but in parliament itself the puritans were supported in such a manner as to show that a strong feeling was growing up against the hierarchy. From the debates

* Great numbers of those who had been Catholics under Mary retained their livings and conformed. Only 192 of all orders chose to part with their preferments.—Strype's Annals, iii. i. 106.

† Parker, i. 442. Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, i. 195, 196.

‡ Thomas Cartwright was one of the first in England to reject the episcopal order and publicly espouse the presbyterian system. He was Lady Margaret's professor at Cambridge, and very popular in advocating anti-hierarchical principles. In 1570, while Browne was at Islington, he was deprived of his professorship by Whitgift, vice-chancellor of the University, for refusing to renounce his sentiments. The propositions which he presented to the vice-chan-

in the House, in April, 1571, it is evident that there was a great inclination not only to effect a reformation in ecclesiastical matters, but to restrain the power of the bishops and other functionaries of the church. "Mr. Strickland, a grave and ancient man," as we are informed, "spake at large of the abuses of the church of England and of the churchmen; as, first, that known papists are admitted to have ecclesiastical government and great livings; that godly, honest, and learned protestants have little or nothing; that boys are dispensed with to have spiritual promotions; that by friendship with the master of the faculties, either unable men are qualified, or some one man allowed to have too many several livings; finally, he concluded with petition, that, by authority of the House, some convenient number of them might be assigned to have conference with the lords of the spirituality, for consideration and reformation of the matters by him remembered." * He afterwards brought in a bill, which was so far approved of as to be read for the first time. And then began that struggle between the commons and the court which, after many vicissitudes, reaching through the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles, terminated in the complete overthrow and execution of the last. In the same year, we find Browne cited

cellor were greatly in advance; and probably Browne did not go so far as he did at this time. He reduced the officers of the church to bishops and deacons, and contended for each church to be governed by its own ministery and presbytery.—Price, i. 218. See Hanbury's edition of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity, vol. i. for a brief but admirable sketch of the life of Cartwright; also, the recent "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright," by the Rev. B. Brook.

* D'Ewes's Journal, p. 157.

to appear before Archbishop Parker,* at Lambeth, as Neal has informed us in the following words.

"In the month of June, the archbishop cited the chief puritans about London to Lambeth; viz., *Mr. Goodman, Lever, Sampson, Walker, Wyburn, Goff, Percival, Deering, Field, Browne, Johnson*, and some others. These divines, being willing to live peaceably, offered to subscribe the articles of religion, as *far as concerned the doctrine and sacraments only;* and the book of *Common Prayer*, as far as it tended to edification; it being acknowledged on all hands that there were some imperfections in it; praying, with respect to the *apparel*, that neither party might condemn the other, but that those who wore it, and those who did not, might live in unity and concord. How reasonable soever this was, the archbishop told them peremptorily, that they must come up to the standard of the queen's injunctions, or be deprived. *Goodman* was also required to renounce a book that he had wrote many years ago, when he was an exile, *against the government of women;* which he refused, and was therefore suspended. *Mr. Strype* says, that he was at length brought to a revocation of it, and signed a protestation before the commissioners at *Lambeth*, April 23, 1571, concerning his dutiful obedience to the queen's majesty's person, and her lawful government. *Lever* quietly resigned his prebend in the church of *Durham*. *Browne* being domestick chaplain to the Duke of *Norfolk*,† his patron undertook to screen him: but the archbishop sent him word, that no place within her majesty's dominions

* Hanbury has referred to this event, but mentions Whitgift instead of Parker. Whitgift was not archbishop until 1583.

† The Duke of Norfolk had been a pupil of Foxe, the martyrologist.

was exempt from the jurisdiction of the commissioners; and, therefore, if his *grace* did not forthwith send up his chaplain, they should be forced to use other methods. This was that *Robert Browne* who afterwards gave name to that denomination of dissenters called *Brownists;* but his family and relations covered him for the present." * The terms in which he is spoken of, and the company in which he is found, sufficiently indicate the eminence of Browne at that early period of his life. But it is apparent that he was at this time a puritan, and nothing more. In the course of a few years, we find his name mentioned again, under peculiar circumstances.

In consequence of the impression produced on the public mind by the proceedings in parliament and elsewhere, an attempt was made by artifice to regain some measure of the public sympathy in favour of those who were in power. Speaking of Archbishop Parker, Neal observes, "His zeal against the puritans betrayed him sometimes into great inconveniences; like a true *inquisitor*, he listened to every idle story of his scouts, and sent it presently to the queen or council; and the older he grew, the more did his jealousies prevail." He then proceeds to narrate a story of a "sham plot which was fathered on the puritans," in the following words. "In the month of *June*, one of his servants acquainted him, that there was a design of the *puritans* against the life of the lord treasurer and his *own;* and that the chief conspirator was one *Undertree*, encouraged by the great earl of *Leicester*. The old archbishop was almost frightened out of his wits at the news, as appears by the following passage in his

* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, 1754, vol. i. pp. 187, 188. We are not sure whether the Browne mentioned by this author as being "deprived" in 1573, is the same person.

letter to the treasurer. 'This horrible conspiracy,' (says he) 'has so astonished me, that my will and memory are quite gone; I would I were dead before I see with my corporeal eyes, that which is now brought to a full ripeness.' He then prays, that the detection of this conspiracy may be protected and honourably considered, and the conspirators punished with the utmost severity, otherwise the end would be worse than the beginning. And that he might not seem to express all this concern for his own safety, he tells the treasurer, that it was for *his* sake and the *queen's* that he was so jealous, 'for he feared, that when rogues attempted to destroy those that were so near her majesty's person, they would at last make the same attempt upon *her* too; and that even some that lay in her bosom [*Leicester*] when opportunity served, would sting her.' The archbishop sent out his scouts, to apprehend the conspirators that his *steward* had named, who pretended a secret correspondence with *Undertree;* and among others who were taken into custody, were the reverend *Mr. Bonham*, *Browne*, and *Stonden*, divines of great name among the puritans: *Stonden* had been one of the preachers to the queen's army, when the earl of *Warwick* was sent against the northern rebels. Many persons of honour were also accused, as the earls of *Bedford*, *Leicester*, and others. But when *Undertree* came to be examined before the council, the whole appeared to be a sham, between *Undertree* and the archbishop's *steward*, to disgrace the puritans, and punish them as enemies to the state, as well as the church. So early was the vile practice of fathering sham plots upon the *puritans* begun, which was repeated so often in the next age. *Undertree* had forged letters in the names of *Bonham*,

Stonden, and others; as appeared to a demonstration when they were produced before the council, for they were all written with one hand. When he was examined about his accomplices, he would accuse nobody, but took the whole upon himself; so that *their honours* wrote immediately to the archbishop, to discharge his *prisoners*. But, which is a little unaccountable, neither Undertree nor the archbishop's *steward* received any punishment His grace's reputation suffered by this plot; all impartial men cried out against him, for shutting up men of character and reputation in prison, upon such idle reports."*

The Browne† referred to in this narrative, is, in all probability, the one with whom we are now concerned. He would at that time be in his twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year, and was engaged as a lecturer at Islington. The circumstance related above, still points him out as a person distinguished for his advocacy of puritan principles; and this second taste of the power of the bishops, and farther insight into the intrigues of the court, would naturally have great influence upon his mind. He was no ordinary character, neither did his enemies deem him so. Had such been the case, this first experience of trouble, in consequence of being allied with an obnoxious party, would have induced him to conform; and, coming as he did from an ancient and courtly family, such conduct would have been the less remarkable. This, however, was by no means the case. So far from being cowed,

* Neal, i. 223, 224.

† His name is variously spelt, with or without the final *e*. Fuller and Neal generally spell it *Brown*; Hanbury, however, more correctly, *Browne*.

his spirit rose with the emergency. He persevered in his puritanical course; and was led to discern the scriptural defect not only of the established polity, but also of the puritan or presbyterian one.

We hear nothing of him, however, from this time till about the year 1580. If, as is probable, he spent the interval in the neighbourhood of London, he could not fail to be deeply interested in some of those scenes which were enacted in parliament, as well as in the discussion between Cartwright and Witgift, respecting the claims of episcopacy and presbytery. It was in 1575, that Peter Wentworth, speaking on behalf of the liberties of parliament, represented a conversation which took place between himself and Archbishop Parker. "I have heard," he says, "of old parliament men, that the banishment of the pope and popery, and the restoring of true religion, had their origin from this House, and not from the bishops; and I have heard that few laws for religion had their foundation from them; and I do surely think, before God I speak it, that the bishops were the cause of that doleful message,* and I will shew you what moveth me so to think. I was amongst others, the last parliament sent unto the Bishop

* In 1571—2, various bills were introduced of an ecclesiastical kind, amongst which was one to enforce the articles of religion agreed upon by the convocation of 1562. It was at this time that a message was brought from the queen that the house should not deal in any matters of religion without permission of the bishops. Hume says of the above speech, that it contains "a rude sketch of those principles of liberty which happily gained, afterwards, the ascendant in England;" and of Wentworth, that he was "the true forerunner of the Hampdens, the Pyms, and the Hollises, who in the next age, with less courage, because with less danger, rendered their principles so triumphant."

of Canterbury, for the articles of religion that then passed this House. He asked us why we did put out of the book the articles for the homilies, consecrating of bishops, and such like? Surely, sir, said I, because we were so occupied in other matters, that we had no time to examine them, how they agreed with the Word of God. What, said he, surely you mistook the matter; you will refer yourselves wholly to us therein. No, by the faith I bear to God, said I, we will pass nothing before we know what it is; for that were but to make you popes. Make you popes who list, said I, for we will make you none. And sure, Mr. Speaker, the speech seemed to me to be a pope-like speech, and I fear lest our bishops do attribute this of the pope's canons unto themselves, *Papa non potest errare;** for surely if they did not, they would reform things amiss, and not to spurn against God's people for writing therein as they do; but I can tell them news, they do but kick against the pricks, for undoubtedly, they both have and do err, and God will reveal his truth, maugre the hearts of them and all his enemies, for great is the truth and it will prevail."† Although there were few who had the courage of Wentworth, there were many in the house who sympathized with him, and multitudes besides out of doors, of which number Browne was one. Indeed it has been hinted that the course which Browne pursued, was the result of certain instigations which had a political rather than an ecclesiastical motive for their basis. "Resentment of oppression," says Hanbury, "might explain some of the motives which actuated him in part of his subsequent conduct; for, from what is now known

* The pope cannot err. † D'Ewes's Journal, 239.

of the real sentiments of several of Queen Elizabeth's 'most favoured ministers,' Browne might be the *unworthy* promoter of liberal views in mere contradiction to the arbitrary measures of the hierarchy." He also hints, that the lenity of the Lord Treasurer Burghley, to which reference will hereafter be made, was as much the result of his "tactics" as a statesman, as of his kindly feeling as a relative.* He quotes, also, the following passage from Hume, as tending to substantiate his surmise, respecting the manœuvering in which Browne was made use of as a mere instrument for state purposes: "Ever since the first origin of that sect, through the whole reign of Elizabeth as well as of James, *puritanical* principles had been understood in a *double* sense, and expressed the opinions favourable both to a political and to ecclesiastical liberty. And as the court, in order to discredit all parliamentary opposition, affixed the denomination of puritans to its antagonists‡, the religious puritans willingly adopted this idea, which was so advantageous to them, and which confounded their cause with that of the patriots, or country party. Thus were the civil and ecclesiastical factions regularly formed."†

Admitting, as we do, all that Hume has advanced, and even more than has been hinted at respecting the policy of Queen Elizabeth's statesmen, whether of the court or of the church, we cannot but express our conviction that Browne is unfairly dealt with, by any such surmise respecting his motives as those to which we have alluded. The kind of inquiries he resolved; the nature of the principles he advocated; the dispo-

* Hist. Memorials, vol. i. p. 18.

† Ibid. p. 24, note b. ‡ Ibid.

sition of the parties with whom he associated and who adopted his views; the great influence which he possessed in spite of much opposition and the obloquy cast upon his name; the sufferings he endured; the complete absence of everything like proof, direct or indirect, that he was tampered with either by Burghley or any one else; and the want of everything like recompense for services supposed to be performed in behalf of a wealthy as well as powerful party;—all these are abundantly sufficient to refute the hypothesis. It is hardly probable that he would have become a tool for sinister purposes, and have looked for no emolument. A man of his disposition would never have been satisfied with that measure of reward which it is supposed he received for his services, and would certainly have come to it in a more easy and dexterous way. On the whole, we are inclined to believe that Browne was actuated by sincere motives in the greater, and more especially the earlier portion of his public life; and that, in all probability, the statements relating to the close, have been exaggerated by his enemies.

But to proceed with our narrative. After some years, in which we hear nothing concerning him, we find him in the neighbourhood of Norwich, preaching with his accustomed ability, and acting as an avowed separatist from the church of England. Before this time, he had been frequently imprisoned; but when and where, we are not informed. According to Fuller, he used to boast "that he had been committed to thirty-two prisons, and in some of them he could not see his hand at noonday." Such a statement compels us to the conclusion above, since it is hardly possible for

* Church Hist. of Britain, book ix. cent. xvi. sec. 2.

him to have been committed so often *after* this period. At Norwich, Browne associated himself, in the first instance, with a Dutch congregation,* whom he indoctrinated with his views; and afterwards, with the assistance of a schoolmaster of the name of Harrison, became successful in gathering many congregations in the diocese of Norwich, and forming them into churches, according to his own interpretation of scriptural principles. The rapidity with which he disseminated his views is remarkable, and proves either that the minds of men were prepared to receive them, or that he had great powers of persuasion. He was not, however, long unmolested. The bishop of Norwich was at this time a Dr. Freke, a man whose spirit was altogether different from that of his predecessor, Dr. Parkhurst. In his first visitation he made "sad havoc among the puritan ministers," suspending and depriving a considerable number of the most faithful.† These circumstances, and the excitement which they produced, prepared the way, in all probability, for Browne's success. His turn, however, came at last. In 1581, he was committed to prison by the bishop, who gave the following account of him in a letter to Lord Burghley, dated Sudham, 19th April, 1581:—"Herewith I send unto your lordship other articles ministered against one Robert Browne, a minister, and his several answers thereunto: the said party being lately appre-

* Fuller says of Norwich, that it had at this time "almost as many Dutch strangers as English natives inhabiting therein." He seems to be in error in making Browne visit Zealand before he went to Norwich; as well as in stating that he "went over to purchase himself more reputation from foreign parts." Indeed this author is full of inaccuracies.—Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. sec. 2.

† Neal, i. 233.

hended in this country, upon complaint made by many godly preachers, for delivering unto the people corrupt and contentious doctrine, contained and set down more at large in the same articles. His arrogant spirit of reproving being such as is to be marvelled at, the man being also to be feared, lest, if he were at liberty, he would seduce the vulgar sort of the people, who greatly depend on him, assembling themselves to the number of a hundred at a time, in private houses and conventicles, to hear him, not without danger to some thereabout. And so I humbly betake your Honour to God's tuition."*

The bishop was not aware of the relation between his prisoner and Burghley; but soon became acquainted with it by the receipt of the following reply: — "After my very hearty commendations to your lordship: whereas, I understand that one Browne, a preacher, is by your lordship, and others of the ecclesiastical commission, committed to the custody of the sheriff of Norfolk, where he remains a prisoner, for some matters of offence, uttered by him by way of preaching; wherein I perceived, by sight of some letters written by certain godly preachers in your lordship's diocese, he hath been dealt with, and by them dissuaded from that course he hath taken. Forasmuch as he is my kinsman, if he be son to him whom I take him to be, and that his error seemeth to proceed of zeal rather than of malice, I do therefore wish he were charitably conferred with and reformed; which course I pray your lordship may be taken with him, either by your lordship, or such as your lordship shall assign for that purpose; and in case there shall not follow thereof such success as may be to your

* Lansdowne M.SS. No. 33; Hanbury, i. 19.

liking, that then you would be content to permit him to repair hither to London, to be further dealt with as I shall take order for upon his coming; for which purpose I have written a letter to the sheriff, if your lordship shall like thereof. And so I bid your lordship, right heartily, farewell. From the court at Westminster, this 21st of April, 1581. Your lordship's very loving friend, William Burghley."*

What now became of Browne does not appear. If he were sent to London, he must have been speedily released; for in the course of two or three months we find him "troubling" the bishop again, as appears from a second letter to Lord Burghley, dated the second of August, 1581. "May it please your lordship to understand that though Mr. Browne's late coming into my diocese and teaching strange and dangerous doctrine in all disordered manner, hath greatly troubled the whole country, and brought many to great disobedience of all laws and magistrates; yet by the good aid and help of my Lord Chief Justice, and Mr. Justice Anderson, his associate, the chiefest of such factions were so bridled, and the rest of their followers so greatly dismayed, as I verily hoped of much good and quietness to have thereof ensued, had not the said Browne now returned, contrary to my expectation, and greatly prejudiced these their good proceedings; who, having private meetings in such close and secret manner as that I know not possibly how to suppress the same. Am very sorry to foresee that, touching this my diocese, which must in short time, by him and other disordered persons,

* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. sec. 2. Fuller spells the name *Burleigh*, as also do most historians.

which only seek the disturbance of the church, be brought to pass. And, therefore, the careful duty I ought to have to the country being my charge, enforceth me to crave most earnestly your lordship's help in suppressing him especially, that no further inconvenience follow by this his return: and procuring my Lord Chief Justice and Mr. Anderson such thanks from her Majesty for their painful travail in that behalf, that thereby they may be encouraged to go still forwards in the same; and herewithal, if it would please your lordship to give me your good advice, how to prevent such dangers as through the strange dealings of some of the gentlemen in Suffolk about Bury, is like to ensue, I should be much bound to your honour for the same; which gentlemen, in winking at, if not of policy procuring the disordered sort to go forwards in their evil attempts, and discouraging the staid and wiser sort of preachers . . . . will in time, I fear me, hazard the overthrow of all religion, if it be not in due time wisely prevented." *

In consequence of this fresh interference with his labours, he thought it prudent to leave the kingdom. Accompanied by Harrison and "about fifty or sixty persons," he embarked for Holland, and having obtained leave of the magistrates "to worship God in their own way," the entire company settled at Middleburgh in Zealand. Here they formed themselves into a church according to the principles of their leader; Browne being chosen as teacher, and Harrison as pastor.† The press being unrestrained, Browne published his sentiments in "A Book which showeth the

* Lansdowne M.S.S. Hanbury, i. 20.

† Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation; or, An Impartial Account of the History, Nature, and Pleas of the present Sepa-

Life and Manners of all true Christians; and how unlike they are to Turks and Papists, and Heathen Folk. Also, the Points and Parts of all Divinity, that is, of the revealed Will and Word of God, are declared by their several Definitions and Divisions." The leading features of Browne's system may be seen from the following extracts.

"*The church planted or gathered*, is a company or number of Christians or believers, which, by a willing covenant made with their God, are under the government of God and Christ, and keep his laws in one holy communion: because Christ hath redeemed them unto holiness and happiness for ever, from which they were fallen by the sin of Adam. *The church government*, is the lordship of Christ in the communion of his offices; whereby his people *obey* to his will, and have mutual use of their graces and callings, to further their godliness and welfare.

"*The kingdom of Christ*, is his office of government, whereby he useth the obedience of his people to keep his laws and commandments, to their salvation and welfare. *The kingdom of Antichrist*, is his government confirmed by the civil magistrate, whereby he abuseth the obedience of the people to keep his evil laws, and customs, to their own damnation. . . . . *Separation* of the open wilful, or grievous offenders, is a dutifulness of the church in withholding from them the Christian communion and fellowship, by pronouncing and showing the covenant of Christian communion to be broken by their grievous wickedness, and that with mourning, fasting, and prayer

ration from the Communion of the Church of England, &c. Second edition, 1681, p. 48.

for them, and denouncing God's judgment against them.

"*The office of teaching and guiding*, is a charge or message committed by God unto those who have grace and gifts for the same, and thereto are tried and duly received of the people, to use their obedience in learning and keeping the laws of God.

"*Eldership* is a joining or partaking of the authority of elders, or forwardest and wisest, in a peaceable meeting, for redressing and deciding of matters in particular churches, and for counsel therein.

"*A Pastor* is a person having office and message of God, for exhorting and moving especially, and guiding accordingly: for the which he is tried to be meet, and thereto is duly chosen, by the church which calleth him; or, received by obedience where he planteth the church.—*A Teacher* of doctrine is a person having office and message of God, for teaching especially, and guiding accordingly, with less gift to exhort and apply: for the which he is tried to be meet, and thereto is duly chosen, by the church which calleth him; or, received by obedience where he planteth the church.—*An Elder*, or more forward in gift, is a person having office and message of God, for oversight and counsel, and redressing things amiss: for the which he is tried, etc.

"The Reliever [or *Deacon*] is a person having office of God to provide, gather, and bestow the gifts and liberality of the church as there is need: to the which office he is tried and received as meet.--The *Widow* is a person having office of God to pray for the church, and to visit and minister to those which are afflicted and distressed in the church: for the which she is tried and received as meet.

"*Civil Magistrates* are persons authorised of God, and received by the consent or choice of the people, whether officers or subjects, or by birth and succession also, to make and execute laws by public agreement; to rule the commonwealth in all outward justice; and to maintain the right, welfare, and honour thereof, with outward power, bodily punishments, and civil forcing of men.

"*The gathering of voices and consent of the people,* is a general inquiry who is meet to be chosen; when, first, it is appointed to them all, being duly assembled, to look out such persons among them; and then, the number of the most which agree is taken by some of the wisest, with presenting and naming of the parties to be chosen, if none can allege any cause or default against them.—The *Ordaining* by some of the forwardest and wisest, is a pronouncing them with prayer and thanksgiving, and laying on of hands (if such imposition of hands be not turned into pomp or superstition), that they are called and authorised of God, and received of their charge to that calling."

It appears from the above, that Browne held some of the principles of the presbyterian or puritan party in respect to intra-congregational arrangements.* He divided the officers of the church into elders and deacons; but the elders he also divided into elders,

* The distinction here made is of some importance. By intra congregational presbyterianism we mean a government of the congregational church by elders in addition to, but inclusive of, the pastor. This is quite compatible with congregational Independency, if the church has the ultimate authority. But extra-congregational presbyterianism, developed in sessions, synods, consistories, conferences, &c., having authority over ministers and churches, is subversive of congregational Independency. Browne did not favour the last kind of presbyterianism.

pastors, and teachers. To the deacon he also added the deaconess or widow. In every other respect his system was congregational. No synodical or sessional authority was admitted into it. The interference of the civil magistrate, even if it amounted only to a confirming the government of the church in religious matters, was denounced as the kingdom of antichrist. Discipline, or the separation of offenders by withholding from them Christian fellowship, was enforced as an important duty. The views of Browne, therefore, at this time, were essentially the same as those afterwards held by his successors; and being derived from scripture, were to be tested by that standard, and not by the character of the merely human interpreter.

How long Browne remained at Middleburgh, it is difficult to ascertain. According to some, he returned in 1589;* according to others, in 1585;† but according to another authority, at a much earlier period. Stillingfleet would lead us to infer that Browne returned in 1582, the same year in which he settled there. Speaking of the church, he says, "they had not been there *three months;* but at the falling out between Browne and Harrison, Browne forsakes them, and returns for England." ‡ In addition to this, he tells us that Browne subscribed, "promising to the archbishop to

* Neal, i. 252.

† Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, i. 312. Hanbury, i. 23. Fuller's supposition we have already referred to.

‡ Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 48; in which the dean refers for his authority to Stephen Offwood's advertisement to John Delecluse and H. May, pp. 10, 39. Hanbury says, "whether his (Browne's) personal conduct were impeached we have not discovered." For an account of "the unreasonableness of separation," and the prolonged controversy of which it formed a

live obediently to his commands."* He also gives us the following information respecting the quarrel between Browne and Harrison, in the words of a letter, which, he says, Harrison wrote to a friend in London: "Indeed, the Lord hath made a breach between us for our sins, which hath made us unworthy to bear his great and worthy cause. Mr. Browne hath cast us off, and that with open, manifest, and notable treacheries; and if I should declare them, you could not believe me. Only this I testify unto you, that I am well able to prove, that Cain dealt not so ill with his brother Abel as he hath dealt with me."† If this statement is to be relied on, it was at this time that Browne began to exhibit a character anything but favourable; and the circumstance of his leaving Middleburgh and the church formed under his care, gives an air of plausibility to the statement. At the same time, it is difficult to understand the terms of the statement itself. If Browne had been guilty of the conduct ascribed to him, Harrison would hardly have said, Mr. Browne has "cast us off." As the pastor of the church,‡ it is

part, see Orme's Lives of Baxter and Owen, more especially the latter, p. 319. Stillingfleet's references to Browne and Harrison appear to have been overlooked.

* Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 48.

† Ibid.

‡ Fuller sneers at Harrison as "a petty pedagogue." This, however, is Fuller's spite. Cartwright wrote a reply to one of his publications, entitled, "An Answere unto a Letter of Master Harrison's," in which he addresses Harrison in terms of high esteem, in consequence of his personal knowledge of him at Middleburgh. He says, "I shall willingly hearken unto any, much more unto you, upon whom the Lord in mercy hath bestowed good graces." Brook's Life of Cartwright, p. 304, 306. See also, Stillingfleet, as above, p. 30. Browne replied to this "answere."

more likely that he would have carried out that discipline which the system required. As to Browne's "subscribing," it is difficult to deny what Stillingfleet has advanced, and yet the time does not appear to tally with what is recorded by other parties.

In 1584 we find him in Scotland, accompanied by several others. In consequence of his pursuing his former line of conduct in respect to the establishment in that country, he was regarded as a "malcontent;" committed to prison for a day or two; and brought up for trial. He met however with favour from the court, and according to some was not only protected, but encouraged.* This year in Scotland was one of considerable excitement. In February, Melville, the successor of Knox,† had been summoned before the privy council, to answer for certain treasonable speeches alleged to have been delivered in a sermon of his, and fearing the consequences, had fled to Berwick. Those acts of parliament also, known amongst the people as "the black acts,"—which ordained that no ecclesiastical assembly should be held without the king's consent, that a refusal to follow the counsel of the king and privy council should be punished as treason, and that all ministers were to acknowledge the ecclesiastical superiority of the bishops, — were passed about the same time. What precise part Browne took, we are not informed. "It may be inferred," says Hanbury, "that he was acting covertly, in subserviency to the courtiers against the dominant divines."‡ The facts of the case, however, scarcely warrant such an inference. King James, in his

* M'Crie's Life of Melville, vol. i. p. 325.
† Knox died, Nov. 24, 1572.
‡ Hanbury, i. 22.

reference to the matter, classes Browne with Penry, who was not suspected of such subserviency, and distinctly speaks of both as coming into Scotland to sow "their *popple* amongst us." The principles of Browne which led him to oppose an established presbyterianism, quite as much as an established episcopalianism, sufficiently account for the exasperation of the ministers, who aimed to have their system of church government exclusively established, so as to be in perfect independence of the state. At the same time the court party, acting from motives of policy merely, would be inclined to favour Browne, because his arguments would tell somewhat against the exclusive pretensions of the presbyterians. It can hardly be supposed that Browne was willingly used as a mere tool for the accomplishment of their purposes; since the principles he espoused,—King James himself being witness,—were as much opposed to the aims of the one party as the other. Yet further; Lord Burghley, writes to the archbishop of Canterbury on the 17th of July, of this same year, in the following terms: "I am content that your grace and my lord of London, where I fear Browne is, should use him as your wisdoms think meet. I have cause to pity the poor man."† From this it appears that Browne was obnoxious to both parties, and given up even by his relative, as an incorrigible man, who opposed the established religion of both countries; and who having escaped by means of court influence from the hands of the presbyterians in the one, had fallen into the hands of the episcopalians in the other.

* Basil. Dor. p. 143.

† Hanbury, i. 22.

Accordingly, he was cited to appear before the archbishop of Canterbury, soon after, to answer for some one of his publications: which, we are not informed. The following letter, addressed to Christopher Browne,* the father, shows that his relative once more interfered in his behalf, and secured his liberty on certain conditions.

"After my very hearty commendations; understanding that your son, Robert Browne, had been sent for up by my lord bishop of Canterbury, to answer to such matters as he was to be charged withal, contained in a book made by him, and published in print, as it was thought by his means; I thought good, considering he was your son and of my blood, to send unto my lord of Canterbury in his behalf, that he might find what reasonable favour he could show him; before whom I perceive he hath answered in some good sort; and although I think he will not deny the making of the book, yet by no means will he confess to be acquainted with the publishing or printing of it. He hath besides yielded unto his lordship such further contentment, as he is contented (the rather at my motion) to discharge him; and, therefore, for that he purposeth to repair to you, I have thought good to accompany him with these my letters, and to pray you, for this cause or any of his former dealings, not to withdraw from him your fatherly love and affection, not doubting but with time he will be fully recovered, and withdraw from the relics of some fond opinions of his; which will be the better done, if he be dealt withal in some kind and temperate manner. And so I bid you very heartily fare-

‡ Anthony Browne, according to Hanbury.

well. From my house near the Savoy, this 8th of October, 1584. Your loving friend and cousin, William Burghley."*

Browne now repaired to his father's house, where all the influence which a father could exert, was employed in conjunction with that of such divines as were thought most able to confer with him, in order to change his views and induce him to conform. But at present all was in vain; and "the old gentleman," who "would own him for his son no longer than his son owned the church for his mother,"† was anxious to have him removed from Tolethorpe. The following letter, not only implies as much as this, but seems to speak of Browne's condition as any thing but that of a person at large. Probably he was regarded, even under his father's roof, as a kind of ecclesiastical prisoner on his parole, through the kindly intervention of the lord treasurer.

"After my very hearty commendations; I perceive by your letters, that you have little or no hopes of your son's conformity, as you had when you received him into your house; and, therefore, you seem desirous that you might have liberty to remove him further off from you, as either to Stamford or some other place, which I know no cause but you may very well and lawfully do, where I wish he might better be persuaded to conform himself, for his own good, and yours and his friend's comfort. And so I very heartily bid you farewell. From the court, this 17th of February, 1585. Your very loving friend and cousin, William Burghley."‡

* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. § 2.
† Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

To what place Browne repaired after this, or whether he was at liberty to move about as he pleased, as a free subject of the realm, has not been ascertained. According to some, he continued at his father's house for *four* years;* but this is inconsistent with the correspondence given above. It is also stated, that after travelling up and down the country with his assistant,† preaching against the rulers and forms of the church, he went to reside at Northampton, where his preaching soon gave offence; and that he was cited before Lindsell, bishop of Peterborough, who, upon his refusing to appear, publicly excommunicated him for contempt; and that the solemnity of this censure made such an impression upon him that he renounced his principles of separation, and having obtained absolution, was preferred to the rectory of Achurch near Oundle, in Northamptonshire.‡ On whose authority this statement is made, we have not been able to ascertain. It is probably a mere hearsay report, founded only partly upon fact. Fuller declares, "I will never believe, that he ever formally recanted his opinions, either by word or by writing, as to the main of what he maintained." The following letter from the lord-treasurer to the bishop of Peterborough, which speaks only of his being "notably disliked," and omits all mention of his excommunication and recantation, and dwells upon the circumstances of his having, *for a good time*, forsaken his

* Wilson's History of Dissenting Churches, vol. i. p. 15.

† How could he have an *assistant* at this period? Harrison had parted from him, and he had no living. The chronology of Browne's history seems inextricably confused in the common accounts of it.

‡ Ibid.

former course,—seems to favour the view of Fuller: "Although it might seem somewhat strange that I should write to your lordship in the favour of this bearer, Robert Browne, who hath been so notably disliked in the world for his strange manner of writing, and opinions held by him; yet seeing he hath now a good time forsaken the same, and submitted himself to the order and government established in the church, I have been the rather moved to recommend him to your lordship's favour, and to pray you, if haply any conceit may be in you, that there should remain any relics in him of his former erroneous opinions, your lordship would confer with him, and finding him dutiful and conformable, as I hope you shall, to receive him again into the ministry, and to give him your best means and help for some ecclesiastical preferment: wherein I am the more willing to do him good, and am not a little glad at the reclaiming of him, being of kindred unto me, as your lordship, I think, knows. And so I very heartily bid your lordship farewell.—From my house, near the Savoy, the 20th of June, 1589. Your lordship's very loving friend, W. Burghley." *

From this period Browne was silenced. There can be no question, also, respecting his outward conformity. He had not those convictions respecting the duty of a man holding his sentiments, which are essential to the maintenance of a consistent line of conduct; and he was probably alarmed by the sanguinary measures directed against his own followers, two of whom were executed, in 1583. These men maintained to the last the consistency of their profession; and it is somewhat singular that their leader, who had been

* Lansdowne MSS 103, 60. Hanbury, i. 24.

the means of bringing so many over to just and scriptural principles, should be the first to step aside from the true path of honour. At the same time it should be borne in mind, that Browne was eccentric in all his movements; that the personal influence brought to bear upon him was very great; that we have had no explanation of the motives by which he was actuated; that even to the last his sentiments remained unchanged; and that even whilst he had the living of Achurch, he never officiated personally, and may probably have looked upon the emoluments arising from it, in the light of a mere pension, on condition that he should be quiet. While it is admitted that no high-minded man would have acted as he did, his fault was rather negative than positive. He is not chargeable with the conduct of many in his day, of opposing principles which he formerly espoused; much less of persecuting his former friends, in order to vindicate his change of sentiments. Whatever may have reached us respecting the subsequent character of Browne, is scarcely to be relied on, in consequence of the source from which it comes; and the circumstances connected with his death, as related by Fuller, are, in the highest degree, improbable.*

We have thought it proper to refer thus at length to the character and history of Robert Browne, on account of the prominent place he has always held in connexion with the revival of religion in England. Admitting, as we do, the inconsistency of his conduct in the latter period of

* Fuller's Church Hist. book ix. cent. xvi. § 3—7. Pagitt's Heresiography, p. 17. The former has acquired the title of "honest;" but there is little of this quality where his prejudices are concerned.

his life, we are, nevertheless, convinced that more has been made of it than the recorded facts of the case warrant. Had he gone directly over to the church party, sought promotion, obtained a bishopric, and followed in the steps of a Parker and a Whitgift, or even of a Jewel and a Grindal, he could not have been more maligned than he has been. Nay more, we venture to add that old father Fox, Cartwright, and Baxter, made concessions as inconsistent with their avowed principles, as did Robert Browne. Opposed, as he was, by all parties, whether episcopalian, presbyterian, or his own; having suffered so much, already, for giving utterance to his sentiments; urged to keep silence not only by his family connexions, but by the chief minister of state; it is not to be wondered at, although it is deeply to be regretted, that the infirmity of human nature should triumph over his better principles. We are, also, almost constrained to conclude that he held some views respecting the lawfulness of avoiding persecution, which some of his followers also entertained, and which were not widely different from those of the conforming puritans of the day. Mr. Finch, referring to the Brownists, in his speech in parliament in 1592, on occasion of the passing of the bill enacted against them, intimated, in the plainest terms, that it was no principle of theirs, to refuse to go to church, or to speak against the government established. "There be great faults," he says, "in the preamble and the body of this bill. It pretendeth a punishment only to Brownists and sectarians; but throughout the whole bill, not one thing that concerneth a Brownist; and if we make a law against Barrowists and Brownists, let us set down a note of them, who they are. But this bill is, 'not to

come to church,' or to 'speak against the government established;' this is not the opinion of the Brownists."*

From this language it appears, that although the principles of the Brownists denied a scriptural church constitution to the establishment, and disallowed the rightful calling of the clergy, they did not forbid those who held them from occasionally going to church to hear what might be said by the mere preacher, as was the case with Robinson at a later period. The puritans, on the other hand, while admitting the church of England to be a true church, would not attend its ministrations on account of their differing from it in matters of ceremonial and discipline. Hence, while the Brownists charged the puritans with inconsistency in not attending a church admitted to be a true church; the puritans charged the Brownists, or some of them, with inconsistency and dissembling in attending the ministrations of a church which they denied to have a scriptural constitution. Which of the two parties was most in the right it is not difficult to determine, since a mere attendance on ministrations, whether for the purpose of hearing what may be advanced, or upon compulsion of law, does not necessarily imply assent to what is done, or a dereliction of principle.† But to refuse to attend on ministrations appointed by a church acknowledged to be scriptural, partakes somewhat of a schismatical character. Browne, in particular, seems to have been actuated by this line of policy; and hence many of the aspersions, some of them probably unfounded, that were cast upon him. Speaking of the Brownists, a puritan opponent observes:—"Of my adversaries, I rather know

* D'Ewes's Journal, p. 517.

† The case of Naaman is somewhat of this nature. 2 Kings, v. 18.

their nature than their number. Although sundry among them, from time to time, have laboured to be leaders, so upon the spur of emulation have galloped as hard as they could; yet without all question, there is none among them that can justly take the garland from Robert Browne. His writings do forejudge the cause against all his competitors. . . . . Let them not disdain, therefore, that he should bear the name as the father of that family and brood, which, of late years, in a quarrel for the discipline, have made that rend in the assemblies of England. . . . . Barrow and Greenwood nakedly discovered their profession, and are prisoners. Browne cunningly counterfeiteth conformity, and dissembleth with his own soul, for liberty." * In addition to these, the following statement, although evidently not free from malice, confirms the view we have taken. "Although he promised to frequent our churches, and to come to prayers and sacraments, yet, living schoolmaster at St. Olave's in Southwark for two years, in all that time he never did it; and when he was like to have been questioned for it, he withdrew into another parish. Sometimes he would go *to hear sermons*, but that he accounted *no act of communion;* and declared to his friends, that he thought it *not unlawful to hear our sermons;* and, therefore, persuaded his followers in London so to do. Notwithstanding this, he preached in private meetings, and that in the time of public assemblies, when he thought fit; which this author, though a nonconformist and friend of T. C's.,† calls a cursed conventicle." ‡

* S. Bredwell, quoted in Hanbury, vol. i. p. 23.

† Thomas Cartwright.

‡ Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 48. His

From this it is apparent that the conduct of Browne was such as could not be easily understood even by his friends, and was, therefore, the more likely to be misinterpreted or misrepresented by other parties. The principles, however, which he espoused did not depend upon him for their truth, and consequently were cherished by great numbers of the people. Instead of dying out of the minds of men, they revived with increasing power, and spread with great rapidity during the reign of Elizabeth.

We have already adverted to the statement of Sir Walter Raleigh respecting the number of the Brownists in his day.* Opposition, instead of repressing the spirit of the party, only confirmed it. The false exposition frequently given of their sentiments, and the scandal to which they were subjected, made them the more cautious, in each successive period, in verifying them from the Word of God, and when needful in correcting them. Exposed to a cross fire—from the episcopalians on the one hand and the puritans on the other — they stood in need of great firmness; and, on the whole, acquitted themselves with remarkable moderation and courage. Not even the most abusive slanders, nor the fiercest persecution, could drive them from their purpose.

We have already mentioned Harrison, respecting whom little more is known than what has been stated. He appears to have been a man of excellent character, and was much esteemed even by his opponents. It is gratifying to know that he died at Middleburgh,

authority, given on the margin, is a "Defence of the Admonition to the followers of Brown, pp. 133—140."

* See back, pp. 82, 83.

steadfast to the last. Other parties, however, deserve to be mentioned in connection with this early period, whose writings and sufferings constitute a noble testimony to the principles of Independency. We refer especially to Barrowe, Greenwood, and others.

Henry Barrowe was "a gentleman of a good house," according to the testimony of his contemporary, Lord Bacon.* He was the son of a gentleman in Norfolk, and received his education in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he took his degree of B.A. in 1569. He became a member of the society of Gray's Inn, and was for some time a frequenter of the court. It appears that in his youth he led a somewhat dissipated life; but being brought under the influence of Divine truth, became a changed character, and advocated with great power the principles of Independency. Lord Bacon, after stating that he had "lived in London at ordinaries," and had "there learned to argue in table talk, and so was very much known in the city and abroad," adds that "he made a leap from a vain and libertine youth, to a preciseness in the highest degree, the strangeness of which alteration made him very much spoken of."†

Barrowe's most important writings‡ are those in which he defended his principles, and the conduct of his party, against the attacks of a puritan, but con-

* Lord Bacon's works, Child's edition, vol. i. p. 383. He calls the Brownists "a third kind of *gospellers*;" and speaks of them as being "directed by the great fervour of the unholy Ghost."

† Ibid.

‡ Besides the works which are afterwards mentioned in the text, Barrowe wrote "A Brief Discovery of the False Church," &c.; for an account of which see Hanbury.

formist minister, of the name of Giffard.* This person misinterpreting the views of the Barrowists or Brownists, (for the Independents of that age were known by both names,) endeavoured to hold them up to public obloquy, as followers of the Donatists of ancient times. Such conduct, on the part of one who conformed to a church which he did not approve of, was any thing but honourable; but, probably, his object was to curry favour with those in power, and to shield himself as a puritan from some measure of that suspicion under which he laboured. Such policy has often been followed by parties connected with a church from which they have dissented, but whose power they have feared. The conduct of Giffard was all the more ungenerous at this time, inasmuch as Barrowe was a prisoner, together with Greenwood, of whom we shall say more hereafter. In Barrowe's reply to Giffard, entitled "A plain refutation of Mr. Giffard's book, etc.," the following passage, from the dedication to Lord Burghley, gives us an insight into the actual condition of these early witnesses for the truth. "Hitherto, right honourable, have our malignant adversaries had their full scope against us, with the law in their own hands; and have made no spare or conscience to accuse, blaspheme, condemn, and punish us; yea, to pronounce and punish us as 'damnable heretics, schismatics, sectaries, seditious, disobedient to princes, deniers and abridgers of their sacred power, etc.,' to the ears and eyes of all men, openly in their pulpits, and in their printed books, published by the

* Stillingfleet describes George Giffard, or Gifford, as "a nonconformist, at Maldon, in Essex," and speaks of him not only as "joined with Cartwright and other nonconformists," but as "named in one of the *classes* in Essex at that time."

consent and approbation of their church. No trial, all this while, upon any suit or complaint granted us; either civil, that we might know for what cause and by what law we thus suffer,—which yet is not denied the most horrible malefactors and offenders; or ecclesiastical, by the Word of God,--where place of freedom might be given us to declare and plead our own cause in sobriety and order; that so the means appointed of God for our recovery might be used, and we, wherein we should be found to err or transgress, might be convinced to our faces by the Scriptures, and left inexcusable!

"But, instead of this Christian course, they have shut us up, now more than three years, in miserable and close prisons, from the air; from all means so much as to write,—ink and paper being taken and kept from us; and a diligent watch both by our keepers held over us, and also continual searches, upon one pretence or other, made,—where we were rifled, from time to time, of all our papers and writings they could find. And being thus strictly kept and watched from speaking or writing—their conscience yet giving them no rest in all their prosperity and pleasures whilst we, the Lord's poor witnesses against their sins, breathed;—not to speak of their secret and indirect means, whereby they sought to take away our lives;—they suborned, amongst sundry others, two special instruments, Mr. Some, and Mr. Giffard, to abuse and blaspheme us publicly to the view of the world; each of them in two books: the one, labouring to prove us 'anabaptists;' the other 'donatists.' Wherefore, we addressed ourselves, by such means as the Lord administered, and as the incommodities of the place and infirmities of our decayed

bodies and memories would permit to our defence; or rather, to the defence of that truth whereof God hath made and set us his unworthy witnesses, though as signs to be spoken against, and as monstrous persons in this sinful generation. . . . .

"Beseeching your honour's pardon for this bold presumption, the rather, because such necessity was laid upon us by the hand of God, through the importunate challenges and violent provocations of these our accusers; whose mouth must either be stopped, or else, through our default, the holy truth of God which we believe and profess—yea, and our innocency—be betrayed to the perpetual infamy of these our reproachful adversaries." . . . . Signed, "Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood, for the testimony of the gospel, in close prison." *

In the body of the work, after stating his objections to the church of England, he animadverts on Giffard's inconsistency in appearing in his present character, while he is really a reformer or puritan. With respect to the charge of their being donatists, he says, "let him look, therefore, to the measure he meteth, lest it be measured unto him again with the same, not only in this matter of 'schism,' but even in that especial point of 'donatistry,' which he, of a singular judgment above all others of the time hath espied out, and taken no small pains to compare and liken us unto them from point to point; forgetting, in this heat of zeal, how the papists have continually battered them with the same ordnance, with much greater advantage than he hath us."

In reply to the reasoning of Giffard respecting the

* Plain Refutation, &c., 1605. Hanbury, i. 52.

impropriety of private persons trying to reform the church, he says, "The faithful are commanded to gather together in Christ's name, with promise of direction, and protection, and with authority not only to establish his laws and ordinances amongst them, but faithfully to govern his church thereby. For the kingdom of God consisteth not in word, but in power. Now, this assembly of the faithful, before they be planted and established in this order, consisteth hitherto but of particular *private* persons; none, as yet, being called to office or function. Therefore, we may well conclude that God commandeth his faithful servants, being as yet private men, together to build his church, according to the pattern of Christ's Testament; without altering, changing, innovating, etc. And for this, we have the example of the primitive churches for our patterns and warrants, which sued not to courts and parliaments, nor waited upon princes' pleasures, when the stones were in a readiness, but presently having received the faith of Christ, received, likewise, the ordinances of Christ, and continued in the same. If they should tarry princes' leisure, where were the persecutions you speak of? Princes never punish them that obey their behests." *

In another part, after referring to the offices of the ministers of the church of England, and classifying them under three heads, he states under the second his views respecting collegiate institutions, and proves himself a worthy advocate of a learned ministry and learning in general. "Yet would I not," he says, "that any one should deem, or suppose, that we condemn any lawful arts, or necessary sciences; or any

* Plain Refutation, p. 5; Hanbury, i. 54.

holy exercises, or schools of institution; and so do labour to bring in barbarism, as Mr. Giffard,* Mr. Some, and others have given out. No, we are so far from it, as we blame these universities, collèges, and schools, for their heathen, profane, superstitious, unchristian societies, disorders, customs, ceremonies; for their vain, curious, and unlawful arts and studies; and their manner of teaching them, etc. We desire with our whole hearts, that the tongues, and other godly arts, were taught not in the universities, or a *few* places *only*; but in all places where an established* church is; at the least in every city of the land! Yet this indeed we hold, that every Christian man ought to have his abiding and dwelling, and to bring up his children, in such places where a Christian congregation is; and, that all schools of learning ought to be kept in such places where both teachers and scholars may be under the holy government and censures of Christ in his church; and may live and be kept in holy order. Then, that the arts and sciences which are thus taught or studied, be not vain, curious, or unlawful; but necessary and godly. Thirdly, that they be not taught, exercised, or practised, after any profane, vain-glorious, or superstitious manner; but in all sobriety, modesty, and in the fear of God. To these few rules, if their universities, colleges, schools, were reformed, then should they not be, as they now are, the seminaries of antichrist; the bane of the church; the corruption of all youth in the land: but then, should they be, that which they now pretend, the schools of all godly learning, to garnish

* He does not refer to a church politically established; the word is used in its ordinary, not conventional sense.

the church: to furnish the commonwealth with fit and virtuous men for every place, office, and estate" *

The following passage contains a development of his views respecting a scriptural call to the ministry, and the right method of ordination; from which it is apparent, that whilst asserting the congregational Independency of each particular church, he advocated union between the churches in matters of common interest. "Every particular congregation being a faithful flock, destitute of some minister,—for example, of a pastor,—ought to make choice of some one faithful Christian of whose virtues, knowledge, judgment, fitness, and conversation, according to the rules in that behalf prescribed, they have assured proof and experience, in some Christian congregation or other where he hath lived. Such a one, the whole congregation being gathered together in the name of God, with fasting and prayer for the especial assistance of his Holy Spirit, to be directed to that person whom the Lord hath made meet, and appointed unto them for that high character and ministry. In which election, every particular member of the said congregation hath his peculiar interest of assent or dissent; showing his reasons of dissent in reverent manner, not disturbing the holy and peaceable order of the church: whose exceptions and reasons are to be considered of and compared to the rules of the Word, if they be found peremptory and true; as, the party to be of no sound judgment in the faith; of no sufficient knowledge in the Scriptures; a drunkard, a smiter, covetous; one that ruleth not well his own house, wife, children, etc.;—then yieldeth the whole church to their reasons, or rather, to the Word of God. But

* Plain Refutation, p. 124.

if their exceptions be insufficient, or untrue, then proceedeth and standeth their election; and the persons that take them are publicly reproved, according to their offence.

"This choice, thus made, accepted, and determined, the Elect is to be publicly ordained, and received in and of the same Congregation whereof and whereunto he is chosen: if there be an eldership in that congregation, by them, as the most meet instruments, with fasting, prayer, exhortation, etc; if not, then by the help of the elders of some other faithful congregation; one church being to help and assist another in these matters. But, if the defection and apostacy be so general, as there be not any where any true elders to be found, or conveniently to be had, yet then hath the church that hath power and commandment to choose and use ministers,—yea, that *only* hath that most high and great spiritual power of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon earth, committed unto their hands,—power also to ordain their ministers by the most fit members and means they have. For the eldership doth not add more power, but more help and service to the church in this action. Neither doth this action,—which is but a publishing of that formal contract and agreement betwixt the whole church and these elect; the church giving, and the elect receiving these offices, as by the commandment of God, with mutual covenant and vow, each to other, in all duties,—belong to the elders only, as separate from the church, to do it for and in the church; but to the elders, as the most fit members and instruments of the church. Otherwise, when the true ministry ceased, as in the general apostacy, they could never again be recovered in the church; because

they cannot have this ordination of true elders, and so must the ministry, sacraments, and ordinances of Christ's Testament cease for ever, and the true established church never be seen again upon earth; unless, with the papists, they will make a personal succession of ministers in some place, ever since the apostle's time; or with Mr. Giffard, make a true, public ministry, sacraments, etc., in the church of Rome, in the deepest apostacy! Which yet, of all other, is the most absurd proposition that ever was uttered by any man, or published and allowed by any church; contrary to all the rules of God's Word; and even to itself; for, how, can there be, by any reasonable man, imagined, or seen, public apostacy and public faith in the same estate, at one and the same instant? But now, if they hold the church of Rome the true church, and her elders true ministers of Christ; then, it is utterly unlawful (for them) to withdraw, depart, or separate from the 'true church' at any time; and, then, were all these and all they, in a most deadly schism. Mr. Calvin's distinction, that he separated from the 'corruptions' of the church of Rome, and not from 'the church' of Rome, will not here stand; for thereby they confess the church of Rome the 'true church,' and that they for the 'corruptions' of the church depart; which 'corruptions' if they be not such, and so incurable, as to make the church of Rome no church; then is it not lawful, for any such 'corruptions,' to depart from and to forsake the 'true church;' and then are they still in schism, by their own doctrine, and so no true ministers!"*

* Plain Refutation, p. 129.

The work from which these extracts are made, was followed by three others, occasioned by Giffard's replies. In the first of these, he notices the opinions of the church party respecting the perpetual obligation to follow the institutions of the apostolic and primitive churches. One party, he says, gave out, "That the form of ecclesiastical government, prescribed in Christ's Testament, practised by the apostles and primitive churches in the times of persecution, is not now necessary or tolerable under a Christian prince;" the other party, "that those ordinances, and that government, which they acknowledge Christ to have instituted and prescribed to his church, unto the world's end, may not now, under a Christian prince, be put in practice by the church, if he fostered the same, as they might, ought, and were, under heathen princes, by the faithful in all ages." He then opposes both of these positions. By the former, he says, "the prelates defend their outrageous government, and all their anti-christian proceedings." By the other, "the time servers and counterfeit reformists colour and defend their perfidy, not practising the gospel of Christ." Both parties, he adds, "most impiously abrogate the heavenly government and ordinances of Christ in his church; and abuse that most blessed and comfortable ordinance,—the Christian magistracy. Both of them shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; neither entering themselves, nor suffering such as would."

In the second of these publications entitled "A few Observations to the readers of Mr. Giffard's Last Reply," he informs the reader that both he and Greenwood had been "four years and three months, without trial, or relaxation, kept by the prelates in most

miserable and strait imprisonment," up to the time of his writing; and with scarcely "any means to defend or answer," for themselves. Such, however, was the season in which Mr. Giffard thought it his duty to attack them;—their books intercepted, their persons imprisoned, and every impediment purposely placed in their way to prevent them from expressing their thoughts in writing. Their spirit, however, rose with the emergency, and proved fully equal to their trying position.

John Greenwood, the friend of Barrowe, had also been educated at Cambridge, though at a later period than the latter, having taken his bachelor's degree in 1580. He was for some time chaplain to Lord Rich, and afterwards doctor or teacher of a church which maintained a precarious existence in and about London. Of the same church, Francis Johnson was pastor, Mr. Bowman and Mr. Lee deacons, and Mr. Studley and Kinaston elders.* Greenwood was imprisoned some time before Barrowe, or in November, 1586. On being cited before the commissioners, who sat at the Bishop of London's palace, called London House, Aldersgate Street, he was interrogated respecting his office and opinions. When asked if he were a minister, and who had degraded him, he replied, "I was one according to your *orders;* and I degraded myself through God's mercy, by repentance." The examination proceeded further:—

"What say you of the church of England; is it a true established church of God?"

"The whole commonwealth is not a church."

"Do you know any true established church in the land?"

* Masters, pp. 227, 228. Neal, vol. i. p. 363. Hanbury, i. 62, 63.

"If I did, I would not accuse it unto you."

"Is not the whole land, as now *ordered*, a true church?"

"No!"

In the course of the same examination, he stated his conviction that every congregation of Christ ought to be governed by that presbytery which Christ appointed: namely, pastor, teacher, and elder; that though the prince forbade them to correct the vices of men by the censures of the Word, they must nevertheless do what God commands; and that the order, government, and laws of the church, as then established, could not be approved of.

Greenwood, also, answered Giffard's publications, during the time of his imprisonment in the Fleet. He and Barrowe were companions not only in tribulation, but in the maintenance and defence of scriptural principles. There is great ability in Greenwood's writings, combined with some learning and scholarship. He writes with great severity against the conforming puritans of the day; not without reason, considering his provocations. Had he lived at a later period, he would probably have expressed himself in terms less harsh; but, then, at a later period, he would not have met with such treatment. On all essential points he and Barrowe were one, and there is no need, therefore, to refer any further to his writings.* But we must proceed to a statement of the sufferings of these noble-minded men; and in order that the reader may have a proper conception

* His principal writings were an "Answer to George Giffard's pretended Defence of Read Prayers and Devised Liturgies, &c. 1590;" and "A Brief Refutation of Mr. Giffard's supposed Consimilitude betwixt the Donatists and us, &c. 1591."

of their position, we shall take a brief review of the ecclesiastical condition of the country at this period.

Ever since the rise of the Brownists, in 1581, the most arbitrary measures were employed by the bishops of the church to suppress them. The ferocity of Archbishop Parker, although capable of being contrasted with the more moderate and compassionate demeanour of Grindal, was even exceeded by that of Whitgift. Both Parker and Whitgift were conformists to the church of England, after having been papists in the time of Queen Mary; and the sanguinary lessons which they derived from the church in which they had received their ecclesiastical education, were unhappily enforced by the sanction, and often carried out into practice by the commands of Queen Elizabeth. Many of the puritans and nonconformists were great sufferers; but the Brownists and Barrowists were, on the whole, the most severely dealt with. This is strikingly confirmed by the fact, that even those parties who petitioned for mercy themselves, had no mercy upon the Brownists. The magistrates of Suffolk, in their address to the lords in council, in 1583, while complaining that they were called puritans, and remonstrating in behalf of their puritan ministers, as "painful ministers of the Word," who were "marshalled with the worst malefactors, presented, indicted, arraigned, and condemned, for matters of very slender moment;" could nevertheless unblushingly say, "we allow not of papists, of the family of love, of anabaptists, or Brownists. No; we abhor all these, we punish all these." * While such a remonstrance as this had the effect, for a season, which it was intended to have, in staying

* Strype's Annals, iii. i. 264.

proceedings against the conforming puritans; the Brownists derived no benefit from it, but, on the contrary, were treated with greater severity than before. Elias Thacker and John Copping were both executed at Bury St. Edmunds; the former on the fourth, and the latter on the sixth of June, 1583.* The indictment against them was for spreading certain books against the Common Prayer, which had been written by Robert Browne; which, it was asserted, undermined the constitution of the church, by acknowledging her Majesty's supremacy *in civil causes only*. Mr. Copping, who suffered a long and illegal imprisonment, was charged with having aggravated his crime by not allowing his child to be baptized. Not that he was opposed to baptism, but being unable to get any preacher to baptize without godfathers and godmothers, which in his conscience he could not permit, he was reduced to the necessity of having the rite neglected. Such a charge, brought against him while he was under confinement and separated from his own family, was a most gratuitous piece of vindictiveness. Such, however, was the temper of the bishops of that day.

In the same year, the Court of High Commission,† which Hume has denounced as "a real inquisition, attended with similar iniquities and cruelties," was established by the procurement of Archbishop Whitgift. The object of this court was to secure the con-

* Neal, vol. i. p. 260.

† The Court of the Star-chamber had been in existence long before (Hallam's Constitutional Hist. i. 65); but was superseded by this, until Cawdrey appealed from the latter to the Court of Exchequer in 1591. 5 Coke's Reports. Heylin's Hist. of the Presbyterians, viii. 21.

demnation of unlawful books, by the examination of authors, printers, and publishers; the sequestration of the property of those who came under ecclesiastical censure; and the enforcement of the ecclesiastical law in all its parts, by various civil penalties. The constitution of the court, as indicated by the letters patent, dated December 9, 1583, was as follows. There were forty-four commissioners; of whom twelve were bishops, some privy councillors, and the rest clergymen or civilians. The court, composed of these, was empowered to put into execution the acts of supremacy, uniformity, etc. Three parties might form a quorum, with certain restrictions, for the purposes mentioned above; and the tyranny of the triumvirate was thus imposed upon the nation. No sooner was this court established, than Whitgift sought to render it efficient. This man was thorough in all that he did; especially if souls were to be snared, or persons of real piety to be punished. He seemed to take a malicious delight in bending the laws over to the side of persecution, and where no law existed which could be thus used, he either made, or sought to procure one. He was probably more feared and detested than any man of his day. The puritans, and others, were treated by him "as Turks or dogs," rather than "as men, or ministers of Jesus Christ;" * and the opinion formed of him by the puritans, was justly merited. No bishop was deemed "so tyrannical as he; no, not Bonner." His throne was "the chair of pestilence;" his mouth "full of cursing against God and his saints;" "his feet swift to shed blood;" while "one had as lieve see a serpent, as meet him." This man pushed

* See Wigginton's Testimony in Brook's Puritans, vol. i. p. 420.

on his inquisitorial measures with almost inconceivable harshness; and but for the interposition of Lord Burghley, who was of a different disposition, and whose mere statesmanship had in it more of "the quality of mercy," than all the Christianity of the bishops put together; there is no knowing how much wretchedness would have speedily resulted from his instrumentality. As it was, the country at large heaved with the throes of a natural resentment against this ecclesiastical despot, which found vent for itself in several ways. The lords of the council and the parliament sympathised, in some measure, with the people, and restrained for a season, if they did not altogether prevent, the excess of tyranny. But for the queen, a more lenient treatment would have been the result. But she loved power quite as much as any of her creatures; and added the caprice of wantonness to the obduracy of the tyrant. Instead of acting a womanly part, she even instigated her minions in their ferocious proceedings, while they ever acted as if they knew that they could not go too far in fulfilling her royal pleasure. Indeed, it requires all the splendour of her reign in other respects, to disperse the thick cloud of infamy which rests upon it, in respect to these matters. We are compelled to pass over many acts which bore hard upon the puritans, in order to notice those proceedings which had a special reference to the Independents. It is somewhat singular, that while a strong puritan feeling was gaining ground in parliament, and evincing itself, by various attempts to reform the church of England according to puritan notions, that the Brownists should have few, or no sympathizers in the House ready to defend their cause. The very same parliament of 1593, which sought to

check the unconstitutional proceedings of the Court of High Commission, passed an iniquitous statute against the Brownists. A bill was adopted, entitled "an Act to retain the queen majesty's subjects in their due obedience," which enacted, that "if any person, above the age of sixteen years, shall obstinately refuse to repair to some church, chapel, or place of common prayer, to hear Divine service; or shall forbear to do the same, for the space of a month, without lawful cause; or shall at any time, after forty days from the end of this session, by printing, writing, or express words, purposely practise, or go about to move or persuade any of her majesty's subjects, or any others, within her highness's dominions, to deny, withstand, or impugn her majesty's power and authority, in causes ecclesiastical; or to that end shall advisedly or maliciously move, or persuade any other person whatsoever, from coming to church, to hear Divine service or to receive the communion according to her majesty's laws; . . . that then, every such person so offending, and thereof lawfully convicted, shall be committed to prison, there to remain, without bail or mainprize, till they shall conform, and yield themselves to some church, chapel, or usual place of common prayer, and hear Divine service, and make such open submission and declaration of their conformity, as by this act is afterwards appointed." * The form of submission enjoined, was the following: "I do humbly confess and acknowledge, that I have grievously offended God, in condemning her majesty's godly and lawful government and authority, by absenting myself from church, and from hearing Divine service, contrary to the godly

* Collier, ii. 636.

laws and statutes of this realm: and in using and frequenting disordered and unlawful conventicles and assemblies, under pretence and color of exercise of religion. And I am heartily sorry for the same, and do acknowledge and testify in my conscience, that no other person hath, or ought to have, any power or authority over her majesty; and I do promise and protest, without any dissimulation, or any color or means of dispensation, that from henceforth I will from time to time obey and perform her majesty's laws and statutes, in repairing to the church, and hearing Divine service, and do my uttermost endeavour to maintain and defend the same." * The penalty for refusing to make this submission, was perpetual banishment; and such as remained beyond the time specified for leaving the country, and such as returned without license from the queen, were to suffer death as felons. Such sanguinary enactments as these require no comment. That they should be passed through both houses of parliament at such a period, serves to modify any complacent thoughts which an Englishman may be prone to indulge, respecting the glory of his country in an Elizabethan era. Whenever the list of great names, in whatever department of learning, science, or achievement, falls under the eye of any man whose philanthropy is not behind his patriotism, he will not be slow to remember that the men who bore those names were the leading spirits of our country, at a time when "mischief and murder" were "framed by a law."

It was in such a period as this that Independency revived in England, and under the operation of such

* Ibid. Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, vol. i. 406.

enactments as the above, Barrowe and Greenwood became martyrs. For some time, however, before this, the spirit of this law had been acted upon. The congregation to which we referred a few pages back, and with which Greenwood was associated, had not been unnoticed by the keen-eyed agents of the bishops. Compelled to secresy in all their proceedings, for some years they had managed to elude the vigilance of their foes. In a country nominally Christian, they were as in a heathen land, where the profession of faith in Christ was an obnoxious and forbidden thing. The primitive Christians conducted their worship in the catacombs, and amongst the tombs. These devoted men had no such places of resort. But every sabbath in summer they sought some secluded rural spot in the outskirts of the metropolis; and there they held their protracted meeting, for prayer and exposition of the Word, from the dawn till the close of the day. The vicinity of London was favourable for such purposes; and many a retired scene in the neighbourhood of Stepney, or Islington, or in the west end, now overbuilt with stately streets and princely residences, might easily be found, where no eye could witness their proceedings but that of "Him who seeth in secret." Who does not love to follow, in imagination, these English confessors and martyrs, as they wend their way, in small groups of two and three, to the appointed place of meeting, passing by cathedral, church, and chapel, that they may have fellowship in the truth, according to their own convictions, and directed by God's Word alone! There when the little band has met, thanksgivings are offered for continued deliverance from the power of the oppressor, and prayer ascends to heaven for persevering faith and

the grace that leads to godliness, and not one of all the company is forgotten, in the communion of heart with heart. John Greenwood opens the book, and expounds some suitable portion of the Word of life, and Francis Johnson exhorts and directs the flock; Mr. Studley and Mr. Kinaston report such cases as need to be attended to; and Mr. Bowman and Mr. Lee receive the contributions of those present to defray the charge of their simple "diet," and distribute to the necessity of the brotherhood. Neither are such of their fellowship forgotten as are in prison, having been apprehended on charge of forsaking the church by law established. They have fellowship with them also in their sufferings, and send them a portion, at least, of their "collection," as a token of their regard. All is simplicity here. Is baptism to be administered? The pastor pours the water from his hand on the face, pronouncing the words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Is the Lord's Supper to be administered? A few "white loaves" and wine are procured. The pastor gives thanks, and breaks the bread, and distributes it thus broken to the deacons, and the deacons to the rest, no other form being used than the words recorded by the apostle, "Take, eat; this is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." In a similar manner "the cup" is passed round, and the words of the original institution indicate its use: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." They then sing a hymn, and make a collection for the poor. Is any individual to be joined to their society? All that they require him to promise, is that he will "walk with them so long as they walk in the way of the

Lord, and as far as may be warranted by tho Word of God." In so simple a manner were their proceedings conducted. In winter, when out-of-door meetings were impracticable, they met at private houses; but the method of their procedure was essentially the same as we have described it. *

This primitive society of believers was never free from the apprehension of molestation; and from time to time individuals associated with them were apprehended and committed to prison. At last the entire congregation was surprised by the bishop's officers, one Sunday, at Islington, in the place where the protestant congregation had been apprehended some years before in the reign of Mary. About fifty-six were apprehended and imprisoned in the jails about London. Before this, Barrowe, Greenwood, Johnson, Settle, and Studly, had been captured; and this hunted and persecuted people scarcely knew where to look for relief or protection. In their examination they confessed fearlessly to all that they had done, and vindicated themselves from many false charges in the presence of the bishops. It was plain that no just accusation could be brought against them. beyond that of separating themselves from the establishment in order to worship God according to the convictions of their own consciences and the directions of the New Testament. They were neither seditious nor tumultuous; but as loyal and honest a body of men as could be found anywhere in her majesty's dominions. But the bishops were not to be moved. They, therefore, made an appeal to the lords of the council, stating their whole case. This appeal is worthy of being placed on record, as an im-

* Neal, i. 363, 364.

portant document in connexion with the early history of Independency; affording, as it does, a clear insight into their principles, and into the persecuting character of the protestant establishment of that day. "We find," they say, "the English hierarchy to be dissonant from Christ's institution, and to be derived from antichrist, being the same the pope left in this land, to which we dare not subject ourselves. We further find, that God has commanded all that believe the gospel to walk in that holy faith and order which he has appointed in his church; wherefore in the reverent fear of his name we have joined ourselves together, and subjected our souls and bodies to *those* laws and ordinances; and have chosen to ourselves such a ministry of pastor, teacher, elders, and deacons, as Christ has given to his church on earth to the world's end, hoping for the promised assistance of his grace in our attendance upon him; notwithstanding any prohibition of men, or what by men can be done unto us. We are ready to prove our church order to be warranted by the Word of God, allowable by her majesty's laws, and no ways prejudicial to her sovereign power; and to disprove the public hierarchy, worship, and government, by such evidence of Scripture, as our adversaries shall not be able to withstand; protesting if we fail herein, not only willingly to sustain such deserved punishment as shall be inflicted upon us, but to become conformable for the future, if we overthrow not our adversaries, we will not say, if our adversaries overcome us."

This was a bold challenge, and by no means likely to be accepted. It indicates, however, the strong convictions and transparent motives of these perse-

cuted separatists. If they err in any respect, it is in placing themselves in a position of being called upon to afford proof of the scriptural character of their religious faith and worship. Whether they were right or wrong, was no concern of any merely earthly government, so long as they conducted themselves as loyal and peaceable subjects of the realm. But to proceed with their address in relation to their sufferings:—"The prelates of this land," they say, "have for a long time dealt most injuriously, unlawfully, and outrageously with us, by the great power and high authority they have gotten into their hands, and usurped above all the public courts, judges, laws, and charters of this land, persecuting, imprisoning, and detaining at their pleasures, our poor bodies, without any trial, release, or bail; and hitherto without any cause either for error or crime directly objected. And some of us they have now more than five years in prison; yea, four of these, five years in close prison with miserable usage, as Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood now in the Fleet; others they have cast into their limbo of Newgate, laden with as many irons as they could bear; others into dangerous and loathsome jails, among the most facinorous and vile persons, where it is lamentable to relate how many of these innocents have perished within these five years; and of these, some aged widows, aged men, and young maidens, etc.; where so many as the infection hath spared lie in woful distress, like to follow their fellows if speedy redress be not had. Others of us have been grievously beaten with cudgells in Bridewell, and cast into a place called Little Ease there, for refusing to come to their chapel service; in which prison several have ended their lives; but upon none of our compa-

nions thus committed by them, and dying in their prison, is any search or inquest suffered to pass, as by law in like case is provided.

"Their manner of pursuing and apprehending us is with no less violence and outrage. Their pursuivants, with their assistants, break into our houses at all times of the night, where they break open, ransack, and rifle, at their pleasure, under pretence of searching for seditious and unlawful books. The husbands in the deep of the night they have plucked out of their beds from their wives, and haled them to prison. Some time since their pursuivants, late in the night, entered in the queen's name, into an honest citizen's house in Ludgate-hill, where, after they had at their pleasure searched and ransacked all places, chests, etc., of the house, they apprehended two of our ministers, Mr. Francis Johnson and John Greenwood, without any warrant at all, both whom, between one and two of the clock after midnight, they with bills and staves led to the counter of Wood-street,* taking assurance of Mr. Boys, the master of the house, to be prisoners in his house until next day; at which time the archbishop, with certain doctors his associates, committed them to close prison, two to the Clink, and the third to the Fleet, where they now remain in distress. Since this they have cast into prison Thomas Settle, Daniel Studley, and Nicolas Lane, taken upon a Lord's-day in our assembly, and shut them up in the Gate-house; others of our friends they are in continual pursuit of; so that there is no safety for them in any one place.

"We therefore humbly pray, in the name of God, and our sovereign the queen, that we may have the benefit of the laws, and of the public charter of the

land, namely, that we may be received to bail till we be by order of law convicted of some crime deserving of bonds. We plight unto your honors *our faith unto God, and our allegiance to her majesty*, that we will not commit any thing unworthy the gospel of Christ, or to the disturbance of the common peace and good order of the land, and that we will be forth-coming at such reasonable warning as your lordships shall command. Oh! let us not perish before trial and judgment, especially imploring and crying out to you for the same. However, we here take the Lord of heaven and earth, and his angels, together with your own consciences, and all persons in all ages, to whom this our supplication may come, to witness that we have here truly advertized your honours of our case and usage, and have in all humility offered our cause to Christian trial." *

This pathetic address was unavailing; the privy council being reluctant to interfere with the proceedings of an ecclesiastical ascendancy. One of the ministers who had been in prison twelve months, was called before the high commission and asked whether he would now go to church. He replied that he should be guilty of dissembling and hypocrisy were he to do so. One of the commissioners then said, "Come to church, obey the queen's laws, and be a dissembler, be a hypocrite, or a devil, if thou wilt." Upon persisting in his refusal to comply with their wishes he was remanded to the Clink; and many of his brethren were committed to the Fleet, where, by the order of Mr. Justice Young, they were shut

* Strype's Annals, iv. 62. Neal, vol. i. p. 365, 366. Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, vol. i. p. 417, 418.

up in close confinement, and died, as Neal informs us, "like rotten sheep," some of starvation, some of infectious distempers, and some of the jail fever. One of those who thus died in prison, at this period, was Roger Rippon, upon whose coffin his fellow prisoners placed the following inscription:—

"This is the corpse of Roger Rippon, a servant of Christ, and her majesty's faithful subject; who is the last of sixteen or seventeen, which that great enemy of God, the archbishop of Canterbury, with his high commissioners have murdered in Newgate within these five years, manifestly for the testimony of Jesus Christ; his soul is now with the Lord, and his blood crieth for speedy vengeance against that great enemy of the saints, and against Mr. Richard Young, who in this and many the like points, hath abused his power for the upholding of the Romish antichrist, prelacy, and priesthood. He died A. D. 1592."

This inscription was copied out and circulated amongst the Brownists and their friends, and created a strong feeling in their favour. Many, however, were apprehended on suspicion or confession of their having been parties to the distribution of that which was so offensive to the hierarchy, and committed to prison.

A further, and last attempt was made to procure redress, in the following petition to Lord Burghley, entitled, "The humble Petition of many poor Christians, imprisoned by the Bishops in sundry Prisons in and about London, etc.—We humbly beseech your honour, either to grant us a speedy trial together, or some free Christian conference, or else in the mean while, that we may be bailed according to law; or else put into *Bridewell*, or some other convenient place, where we may be together for our mutual help

and comfort; or if your *honour* will not yourself alone grant this our request, that then it may please you to be a mean for our speedy relief, unto the rest of her majesty's most honourable privy council.

"The Almighty God, that hath preserved your lordship unto these honourable years in so high service to our sovereign prince, and to the unspeakable comfort of this whole land, give your honourable heart so tender, compassion, and careful consideration in equity, of the poor afflicted servants of Christ, and that (before the Lord plead against this land for *Abel's* innocent blood that is shed in the several prisons) your honour may open your mouth for the dumb in the cause of the children of (devoted to) destruction, (that) you may open your mouth and judge righteously, and judge the cause of the afflicted; as the people of *Israel* when they went to war, first made peace with God, and removed all occasion whereby his wrath might be incensed, lest he should fight against them in battle. For if this suppression of the truth and oppression of Christ in his members, contrary to all law and justice, be without restraint prosecuted by the enemy in the land; then not only the persecuted shall daily cry from under the altar for redress, but God's wrath be so kindled for the shedding of innocent blood of men, even the blood of his own servants, (of whom he has said, *touch not mine anointed*) that if *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, should pray for this people, yet should they not deliver them.

"Pleaseth it then your lordship to understand, that we, her majesty's loyal, dutiful, and true-hearted subjects, to the number of three score persons and upwards, have contrary to all law and equity, been im-

prisoned, separated from our trades, wives, children, and families, yea, shut up close prisoners from all comfort, many of us the space of *two years and a half, upon the bishop's sole commandment,* in great penury and noisomeness of the prisons; many ending their lives never called to trial; some in hunger and famine; all of us debarred from any lawful audience before our honourable governors and magistrates, and from all benefit and help of the laws; daily defamed and falsely accused by published pamphlets, by private suggestions, often preaching, slanders, and accusations of heresy, sedition, schism, and what not. And above all, which most utterly toucheth our salvation, they keep us from all spiritual comfort and edifying by doctrine, prayer, or mutual conference, etc.

"And seeing that for our conscience only we are deprived of all comfort, we most humbly beseech your good lordship, that some free and Christian conference publicly or privately, before your honour, or before whom it would please you, where our adversaries may not be our judges (might be had); that our case with the reason and proof on both sides, might be recorded by indifferent notaries, and faithful witnesses; and if any thing be found in us worthy of death or bonds, let us be made an example to all posterity; if not, we entreat for some compassion to be shewn in equity, according to law for our relief; that in the mean time, we may be bailed to do her majesty service, walk in our callings, to provide things needful for ourselves, our poor wives, disconsolate children and families lying upon us, or else that we might be prisoners together in Bridewell, or any other convenient place at your honour's appointment,

where we might provide such relief by our diligence and labours, as might preserve life, to the comfort both of our souls and bodies."*

This petition was signed by fifty-nine prisoners, distributed as follows:—ten in the Gate-house, five in the Fleet, three in Newgate, eighteen in Bridewell, ten in the Clink, five in the White Lion, three in the Wood-street Compter, and five in the Poultry Compter. In addition to these, were the names of ten who had died in prison, two of whom were widows.

One would have supposed that such a petition as this, so worded, and so signed, would have procured some small amount of pity and show of justice. Such, however, was not the case. It was rejected by both bishops and privy council, for the following reasons:—"1. Because a disputation had been denied to papists. 2. To call the ministry of the church of England in question, is to call all other churches into question, against whom their exceptions entered. 3. The church of England has submitted to disputation three times in King Edward's, Queen Mary's, and Queen Elizabeth's time. 4. These men's errors have been condemned by the writings of learned men. 5. It is not reasonable that a religion established by parliament, should be examined by an inferior authority. 6. It is not reasonable to condemn those foreign churches that have acknowledged *ours* for a true church. 7. Their principal errors have been confuted by St. Austin. 8. This will strengthen the hands of the papists. 9. It has been the manner of heretics to require disputation with clamour and im-

* Strype's Annals, iv. 90. Neal, vol. i. pp. 367—390.

portunity. 10. The cause has been already decided by written books which they may consult. 11. They will not stand to the judgment of the civil magistrate. 12. If the church should satisfy every sect that riseth, there would be no end of disputation."*

Upon such reasons as these, were these conscientious men abandoned to all the severities of prison discipline. Some few, but a very few, may have been set free; the greater number were either banished the realm or executed. Amongst the latter were Barrowe and Greenwood. After undergoing various examinations, in all of which they were faithful to their own sentiments, they were indicted on the twenty-first of March, 1592-3, together with three others, at the Old Bailey. The indictment was "for writing and publishing sundry seditious books and pamphlets tending to the slander of the queen and government." It was true that they had written only against the church as by law established, and in justification of their own conduct as individuals who could not conscientiously conform. The aim, however, of the archbishop was to cast upon them the odium of disloyalty and sedition, and thereby to shelter himself from the charge of being a religious persecutor. Throughout the trial they behaved with great firmness and consistency, asking for no favour, and seeking no mercy. They persisted in declaring their inviolable loyalty to the queen, and obedience to her government; insisting that they neither wrote nor intended any thing against her highness, but only against the bishops and the established hierarchy. Such a plea, however, was vain; they were all brought

* Neal, i. 370, 371. Hanbury, i. 86—90.

in *guilty*. One of the five, Saxio Bellot, who is described as "a gentleman," betrayed his weakness at this crisis, and desired a conference. He then confessed his repentance for what he had done, with many tears, and was pardoned. Two others, Daniel Studley, a girdler, and Robert Bowlle, a fishmonger, remained firm; but were reprieved and sent back to prison. Barrowe and Greenwood were selected as examples by which to terrify the whole party, and had sentence of death passed upon them on the twenty-third of March. They were then commanded to prepare for immediate execution. The next day they were brought out of prison, their irons were struck off, and they were about to be bound to a cart which was to convey them to Tyburn, when a reprieve arrived, obviously for the purpose of allowing them an opportunity to recant. "They sent unto us," says Barrowe, "certain doctors and deans to exhort and confer with us. We showed how they had neglected the time; we had been well nigh six years in their prisons; never refused, but always humbly desired of them Christian conferences for the peaceable discussing and deciding our differences, but could never obtain it at their hands. Neither did these men all this time come unto us, or desire any such matter; that our time was now short in this world, neither were we to bestow it unto controversies, so much as unto more profitable and comfortable considerations. Yet if they desired to have any conference with us, they were to get our lives respited thereunto. Then if they would join unto us two other of our brethren in their prisons, whom we named unto them, we then gladly would condescend to any Christian and orderly con-

ference by the Scriptures, with such or so many of them as should be thought meet."*

Such is Barrowe's own account of this transaction. The circumstance of his writing such a statement, in prison, and in the immediate prospect of death, is as noble a vindication of character as is to be met with on the page of history.†

The respite, however, was of short duration. Early on the last day of March, they were conveyed to Tyburn, and exposed under the gallows, with the fatal rope round their necks. It was thought that by this near approach to the terrors of death they would be unmanned, and moved to recant. Their persecutors, however, knew not the spirit of those with whom they had to deal. In their address to the people,—for they were "permitted to speak a few words,"—they protested their loyalty and innocence; "craving pardon of all men whom they had any way offended, and freely forgiving the whole world;" and praying "for her majesty, the magistrates, people, and even for their adversaries." They had scarcely "finished their last words," when a reprieve again arrived!

Such was the manner in which these persecutors sported with their victims in the presence of death. This second reprieve afforded an opportunity of eliciting the feeling of the people; for we are told that it was not only thankfully received by the prisoners, but

* An Apologie or Defence, &c. p. 92. Strype's Whitgift, ii. 187.

† This quotation and the next following are from a letter written "in the time between his condemnation and execution" to "an honourable lady and countess, of his kindred." The entire document is contained in Henry Ainsworth's "Apologie or Defence of such true Christians as are commonly, but unjustly called Brownists." Hanbury, i. p. 48, 49.

"with exceeding rejoicing and applause of all the people, both at the place of execution, and in the ways, streets, and houses, as they returned."

Probably they had now some hope that their lives would be spared. Barrowe, therefore, wrote to his kins-woman, the "honourable lady and countess," the letter from which we have been quoting, in which he urges upon her the duty of "speaking to her majesty on their behalf." Whether or no this request was complied with, we are not informed. If so, it was of no avail. On the sixth of April, they were again taken to the place of execution, and there put to death.

Such was the end of these noble minded men.* Barrowe was "one of the most remarkable men that ever engaged in religious controversy in the worst of times," and Greenwood was a kindred spirit. Both may have expressed themselves, at times, in terms of too great severity against their adversaries; and their animosity to the establishment may have been wanting in that discrimination which is so essential to the charitable management of religious controversy. But, considering the provocation they sustained, the cruelties to which they were exposed, the necessity which they felt to be laid upon them—in order to their persistance in the true faith — of being steadfast and unmoveable, and wholly of a resolute spirit; considering the times in which they lived, and placing ourselves as much as possible in the position which they occupied in that day; who can accuse them of any

* The statement of Cotton, referred to by various parties, respecting Barrowe's last words, is quite unworthy of being recorded. If true, we require Barrowe's own interpretation of his meaning. Hanbury, i. 62. Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 51.

departure from the spirit and requirements of that gospel which they so heartily received.

The treatment which they experienced, terminated by their execution, was not altogether without effect upon the mind of the queen. Dr. Raynolds who had attended upon them in their last days, was asked by her majesty, "what he thought of those two men, Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood?" Raynolds was unwilling to express his opinion, and replied that it "could not avail anything to show his judgment concerning them, seeing they were put to death." Her majesty, however, was not thus to be put off, and insisted upon his expressing his opinion faithfully. "Whereupon he answered, that he was persuaded, if they had lived, they would have been two as worthy instruments for the church of God, as God had raised up in that age." On this her majesty sighed, but said no more. She evidently felt, however; and alluded to the subject afterwards in conversation with the Earl of Cumberland, in such a manner as to show that this matter engaged her thoughts, and to some extent troubled her.

Before we conclude this chapter, it is desirable to notice the extent to which the principles of Independency were revived by those parties whose names have occupied our pages. The history of individuals and of parties is of importance mainly in relation to the question which respects the return to scriptural principles and institutions.

On reviewing the conduct and opinions of the Brownists and Barrowists, we find that they were essentially Independents, although without the name. They were so, inasmuch as they advocated a return to the apostolic institution in relation to the organi-

zation of the Christian church. They espoused the cause of religious liberty no less by suffering for it than by their avowed opinions. But, in this respect, and up to this point, they were joined by many others. The peculiar feature of that system which they espoused is to be found in the self-government which it conferred upon every local or congregational church. Here their principles and practice were unique. While the establishment ordered every thing in relation to worship and fellowship through the authority of the crown and the bishops, with only a show of clerical representation, and without regard to the sentiments of the laity; and while the presbyterians sought to govern the church by a kind of representative synodical authority; these men adhered to the primitive practice of the Christian church, by disallowing all authority excepting that of the congregation of believing men over themselves, according to the directions of the New Testament. Each church was according to their system complete in itself, for all the purposes of self-management and discipline. In some respects, perhaps, the early Brownists pushed this principle too far; by not allowing the chosen ministers of one church to officiate in any other. This exclusiveness, however, was the result of an extreme view, which Barrowe and his followers learned to correct.*

Both Brownists and Barrowists regarded the officers of the church in an erroneous light, dividing their functions into a number of classes not warranted by the faithful interpretation of the New Testament. It will have been perceived by the reader

* See back, p. 137.

that, instead of bishops and deacons, they had four classes of officers, namely, a pastor, a teacher, deacons, and elders. This multiplication of officers arose from an incorrect view of the various names used in the New Testament to describe one and the same office.* Still, these officers, however numerous, were congregational only, and the absence of synodical arrangements rendered the scheme though imperfect comparatively harmless.

In one respect these parties fell short of the truth, and became somewhat inconsistent; probably without knowing it. "We acknowledge," said Barrowe and Greenwood, "that the prince ought to *compel* all their subjects to the hearing of God's Word, in the public exercises of the church."† It is somewhat singular that such a sentiment as this should not have been felt to be at variance with what is so well expressed by the same parties, and in the same breath, "Yet cannot the prince *compel* any to be a member of the church, or the church to receive any without assurance by public profession of their own faith; or retain any, longer than they continue and walk orderly in the faith."‡ To us it seems inconsistent that the prince should be allowed, or rather obliged, to compel attendance, where it is admitted that he has no power over faith or discipline. Both Barrowists and Brownists, however, held this opinion; and hence the appeal of their leaders in prison to the government of the day, to allow them to expound and defend their principles by the Scriptures.§ The prin-

* See vol. i. pp. 46—55 of the present work.

† Plain Refutation, &c. by Barrowe and Greenwood, p. 4.

‡ Ibid.

§ See also what has been advanced respecting Browne, p. 127.

ciples of civil and religious liberty had not then been investigated and acknowledged as in later times. What they did know, however, of the true principles of freedom was of a vital nature, and in the course of time attracted to itself other portions of truth not fully understood in their day.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN PENRY, AND THE WELSH INDEPENDENTS.

Contemporaneous with the revival of Independency in England, or nearly so, was its revival in the principality of Wales. Before this period that country had been much neglected. Formality and superstition abounded every where, and the grossest disorder prevailed. The subject of this chapter was the first to preach the gospel there publicly, as he himself informs us; and although young, and not long favoured with the opportunity of evangelizing his own country, there is reason to believe that he effected much good, and prepared the way for other labourers in after years. It is evident from his publications and other writings, that if one thing lay more near to his heart than another, it was to lead his much neglected countrymen into the way of truth.

Apart, however, from these circumstances, there is something deeply interesting in the history of this man. His genius, his eloquence, his zeal, his fortitude, his untimely fate, are all points of great attraction.

John Penry, or Ap Henry,* was a native of Brecknock, "born and bred," as he informs us, "in the

* Sometimes written *a' Penry*.

mountains of Wales."* He also speaks of himself as "a poor young man." This, however, must be understood comparatively; since he was educated first at Cambridge, and afterwards at St. Alban's Hall, Oxford, where he took his degree of M. A. in 1586. He was esteemed a young man of great promise, and "well acquainted," says Neal, "with arts and languages." † Even Wood, who heartily hated all puritans and Brownists, is compelled to admit that he was "a tolerable scholar and edifying preacher, and a good man." ‡ Having entered into "holy orders," he became a popular preacher in both universities, and passing into Wales publicly preached the gospel to his countrymen. We have not ascertained what parts of Wales he visited, or what measure of success attended his labours. He saw enough, however, to feel for the spiritual destitution of the country, and never ceased to desire and pray that it might be removed. "I am the first," he writes in a letter we shall have occasion to refer to again, "since the last springing of the gospel in this latter age, that publicly laboured to have the blessed seed thereof sown in those barren mountains. I have often rejoiced before my God, as he knoweth, that I had the favour to be born and live under her majesty, for the promoting this work. In the earnest desire I had to see the gospel planted in my native country, and the contrary corruptions removed, I might well, as I confess in my published writings, with Hegetorides the Thracian,

* Address to Lord Burghley, in Strype's Whitgift, book iv. p. 176. Hanbury, i. pp. 71, 72. He was born either in 1559 or 1560.

† Neal, i. 374.

‡ Athen. Oxon. vol. i. col. 592. Hanbury, i. 72.

forget mine own danger; but my loyalty to my prince did I never forget. And being now to end my days, before I am come to the one half of my years, in the likely course of nature, I leave the success of my labours unto such of my countrymen as the Lord is to raise after me, for the accomplishing of that work which, in the calling of my country unto the knowledge of Christ's blessed gospel, I began." It is probable that some success attended his ministrations, since he refers to the "brethren in the west," in one of his latest writings; intreating the congregation in London to write to them in order "to comfort them." *

What Welshman—what Welsh Christian is there that will not cherish the memory of this "first" preacher of the gospel in that now highly favoured country, where so many have since "entered into his labours," and where multitudes possessing both the principles and spirit of Penry, are seeking to do what it was in his heart to accomplish!

Penry had not been long engaged in these evangelizing efforts, when he was cited to appear before the high commission to answer for some opinions he had broached respecting the homilies and the "reading ministers." This was in 1587, at the time when the nation at large were in arms, anticipating with dread the Spanish invasion. The fears of all parties were awakened; but more especially of the puritans and Independents, who, notwithstanding what they had suffered from the protestant establishment, were the most zealous in their opposition to everything approximating to popery. While Queen Elizabeth, her

* Address to the Congregation, &c. Hanbury, i.

statesmen, and her church, dreaded the threatened approach of Philip on political grounds chiefly, these parties were also moved by deep religious apprehensions. In these circumstances it was felt by many to be a grievous thing that the most zealous preachers were suspended from their functions, when their services were most needed to arouse the people at large to a just sense of their danger; and many attempts were made, by petitions to the queen and others, to bring about a change for the better. While an association was formed in Scotland, the avowed object of which was to offer assistance to the queen against the Spaniards; the brethren in London sought to obtain the liberty of their preachers, "that the people," as they themselves stated, "might be better instructed in the duties of obedience to their civil governors, and not be left a prey to priests and jesuits, who were no better than traitors to her majesty and the kingdom." * Not only was there a great scarcity of preachers; but the greater number of the beneficed clergy were "illiterate men, brought up to trades and not to learning, and others of no very good character in life." † So strong was the feeling in this respect that many of the suspended preachers disregarded the injunction laid upon them by the bishops, and "hearkened unto God rather than men." The Essex ministers, in particular, in their petition to parliament on the 8th of March of this year, openly avowed

* Petition to the Queen, MS. p. 838. Neal, i. 327.

† "New Survey of the Ministry of London," presented to the lord-mayor and aldermen. It appears by this survey that there were at this time only nineteen resident preachers in all London; while the "dumb or unpreaching ministers" were seventeen.—Neal, ibid.

their determination thus to act. "Such," they said, "is the cry of the people to us day and night for the bread of life, that our bowels yearn within us; and remembering the solemn denunciation of the apostle, *Woe be to us if we preach not the gospel*, we begin to think it our duty to preach to our people as we have opportunity, notwithstanding our *suspension*, and to commit our lives and whole estates to Almighty God, as to a faithful Creator; and under God to the gracious clemency of the queen, and of this honourable house." *

Instead of complying with the demand of the times, and the reasonable desires of the puritans and others, the bishops sought to restrain the zealous efforts of such as sought to discharge their duty. The following "commission" was sent to all the ministers and churchwardens of London.

"Whereas sundry preachers have lately come into the City of London, and suburbs of the same; some of them not being ministers, others such as have no sufficient warrant for their calling, and others such as have been detected in other countries, and have, notwithstanding, in the City taken upon them to preach publicly, to the infamy of their calling; others have in their preaching rather stirred up the people to *innovation*, than sought the peace of the church. These are, therefore, in her majesty's name, by virtue of her high commission for causes ecclesiastical, to us and others directed, straightly, to enjoin, command, and charge all parsons, vicars, curates, and churchwardens, of all churches in the City of London, and the suburbs thereof, as well in places exempt as not

* Neal, i. 328.

exempt, that they nor any of them do suffer any to preach in their churches, or to read any lectures, they not being in their own cures; but only such whose licenses they shall first have seen and read, and whom they shall find to be licensed thereto, either by the queen's majesty, or by one of the universities of Cambridge or Oxford, or by the lord archbishop of Canterbury, or the bishop of London for the time being, under seal. And that this may be published and take better effect, we wish that a true copy hereof shall be taken and delivered to every curate and churchwarden of every of the churches aforesaid. The 16th day of August, 1587."

This paper was signed by "John Canterbury, John London, Val. Dale, Edward Stanhope, and Richard Cozin."*

It was at this period that Penry was cited before the high commission. He felt, with others, that homilies read from the pulpit were not exactly suited to the exigencies of the nation in such a crisis. Loving the gospel, and believing in its suitability to all the changing circumstances of the church of Christ, he was grieved to find so many professed ministers of Christ "dumb" when they ought to speak, and contented with the lazy reading of a prepared and printed homily, when they ought to speak "out of the abundance of the heart" to the famishing souls of men. In his zeal he gave expression to his sentiments on these points, in such a manner as to give offence to the ruling powers in the church, and thus brought himself for the first time under reprehension.†

* MS. p. 835. Neal, i. 328.

† Strype's Annals, iii. ii. 94.

Although he escaped this time the severities which commonly fell on those who proved obnoxious to the bishops, he did not feel the less the iniquity of an order of things which allowed such powers as were exercised by the high commission. Taking the New Testament for his guide he found nothing of this nature sanctioned there; and meeting with the persecuted Barrowists or Brownists in London, was led to imbibe their views, and enter into a friendly relation with them, from which he never departed.

His heart, however, was in Wales, and it is probable that he returned to that country as soon as possible, in order to continue his evangelizing labours amongst his own countrymen. In 1588 he published two pamphlets, both of which evinced the interest he took in the moral and religious welfare of his country. The first was 'A View of such Public Wants and Disorders as are in Her Majesty's Country of Wales, with an Humble Petition to the High Court of Parliament for their Redress." * In this he endeavoured to show the necessity which existed for reforming the state of religion among the Welsh people, and the manner in which it should be effected. The second publication was "An Exhortation to the Governors and People of Her Majesty's Country of Wales, to Labour Earnestly to have the Preaching of the Gospel planted among them." † From both of these publications it is evident, that while his motives were of the purest and most benevolent kind, he had not learnt that principle by which all missionary and other kinds of evangelizing labour should be conducted. He looked—and as it proved in vain—to

* Neal, i. 374. † Ibid.

the queen, the parliament, and the government, to effect the object he had so much at heart; and before long, discovered that they had other aims than those which were connected with the enlightenment of the people and the salvation of souls.

In 1590, Penry was again cited to appear before the high commission, to answer a more serious charge than the one we have already noticed, namely, the having been concerned in the writing of some pamphlets, known as the Martin Mar-prelate tracts. A short digression is needful here in order to a correct understanding respecting the cause and character of these celebrated publications, and the part which Penry may have taken in connexion with them.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada, in 1588,* although a happy deliverance for the British nation from the aggressive schemes of Rome and her too presumptuous ally, was not altogether favourable to the condition of the puritan and non-conforming party in England. Freed from fear, and undistracted by the apprehension of foreign invasion, the bishops directed their attention afresh to the religious condition of the country. Instead of relenting in relation to the victims of past oppression, it seemed as if the common deliverance of the country were only a reason for the exhibition on their part of greater ferocity than ever towards their domestic foes. All efforts were used, by silencing the refractory, and restraining

* For a brief but interesting account of this event, see Mackintosh's Hist. of England, vol. iv. chap. i. From that narrative it is apparent that the glory of the defeat of Spain, and of many subsequent successes on the side of England, depended less upon Elizabeth and her government, than upon the spirit of the nation and individual enterprize.

the press, to prevent every, even the least expression of the public mind. Sometimes, however, it happens that extreme measures of this nature lead to results the opposite of those which are intended. It was so in this instance. Had more leniency been shown towards the nonconformists, it is more than probable that their writings against the establishment, its constitution, and ceremonies, would have been moderate enough. As it was, mere dissent was stirred up into fierce opposition, and exasperated feelings, pent up by legal repression, found vent for themselves in the strongest of all forms.

A number of individuals formed themselves into a society or club,* for the purpose of issuing stinging pamphlets and bitter pasquinades against the hierarchy of the day. Some of the most talented and ready amongst them were employed in composing, and others in superintending the printing of these publications. The utmost secrecy was observed both as to the authors and printers.† They were issued and widely circulated. The fearless style in which they were written, the bold and unsparing war they waged against the prelates and their enormous cruelties, the somewhat coarse but effective wit by which they were characterised, gave them a popularity quite unprecedented. Most of all the felt injustice of that condition of things against which they were directed, gave them a fame and an influence which

* Neal, i. 336.

† These pamphlets were printed at a private press, which was first set up at Mouldsey, in Surrey; then at Fausley, in Northamptonshire; afterwards at Norton, Coventry, Woolston, and Manchester. At the last-named place it was seized by the Earl of Derby. Collier, ii. 606.

they could have acquired in no other circumstance. The principal of these writings were issued in the name of Martin Mar-prelate, a title which plainly indicated their object.* Although there is much to be excepted against in all these publications,† the oppres-

* The following are the titles of some of these publications :— "*Theses Martinianæ; i. e.* certain demonstrative conclusions set down and collected by *Martin Mar-prelate the Great*, serving as a manifest and sufficient confutation of all that ever the college of *cater caps*, with their whole band of *clergy priests*, have or can bring for the defence of their ambitious and anti-christian prelacy. Published by Martin Junior, 1589." "*Protestation of Martin Mar-prelate;* wherein, notwithstanding the surprising of the printer, he maketh it known to the world, that he feareth neither proud priest, antichristian pope, tyrannous prelate, nor *godless cater cap*, &c. 1589." "*Hay any work for Cooper?* Against Dr. Cooper, Bishop of Winchester. Printed in *Europe*, not far from some of the bouncing priests, 1590."

† Martin's defence of himself against those who objected to his style should receive a fair hearing. "I saw," he says, "the cause of Christ's government, and of the bishops anti-christian, to be hidden. The most part of men could not be gotten to read any thing written in the defence of the one and against the other. I bethought me, therefore, of a way whereby men might be drawn to do both. Perceiving the humours of men in these times (especially of those that are in any *place*) to be given to mirth, I took that course; I might lawfully do it, for jesting is lawful by circumstances, even in the greatest matters. The circumstances of time, place, and persons, urged me thereunto. I never profaned the *word* in any jest. Other mirth I used as a covert, wherein I would bring the truth into light, the Lord being the author both of mirth and gravity. . . . My purpose was, and is, to do good. I have done no harm, howsoever some may judge Martin to mar all. They are very weak ones that so think. In that which I have written, I know undoubtedly that I have done the Lord and the state of this kingdom great service, because I have in some sort discovered the greatest enemies thereof."—Hay any Work for Cooper, p. 14.

sions practised by the bishops were their ample justification in the opinions of the people. The intemperance of Martin Mar-prelate was "attributed to an honest indignation, while the parties against whom it was directed, were regarded as convicted culprits."*

Many attempts were made to discover the authors of these tracts, but without success. Several persons were suspected, and some suffered death, but without proof of their alleged criminality.† At length suspicion fell upon Penry, and a warrant was issued for his apprehension; but managing to hear of it in time, he left the country and fled into Scotland.

There is no proof whatever that Penry was concerned in any way in the writing or issuing of these publications. He denied it himself; and John Udal, the prison martyr, in his examination before the commissioners, gave indubitable testimony to this effect, in 1590. Lord Buckhurst, one of the commissioners, interrogated Udal in the following manner:—

Buckhurst.—But I pray you, tell me, know you not Penry?

Udal.—Yes, my lord; that I do.

Buckhurst.—And do you not know him to be Martin?

Udal.—No surely; neither do I think him to be Martin.

Buckhurst.—What is your reason?

Udal.—This, my lord; when first it came out, he (understanding that some gave out that he was thought to be the author) wrote a letter to a friend

* Price's Hist. of Nonconformity, i. p. 371.

† "*Sir Richard Knightley, Sir — Wigston,* who had entertained the press, together with the *printer,* and *Humphrey Newman,* the disperser, were deeply fined in the Star-Chamber, and others were put to death."—Neal, i. 339.

in London, wherein he did deny it, with such terms as declare him to be ignorant and clear in it.*

Although, however, Penry was not the author of any of these obnoxious publications, the bishops never forgave him for having been suspected. He remained in Scotland for some time; or from 1590 to 1593. It was whilst he was in that country that he published "A Treatise wherein is manifestly proved, that Reformation and those that are sincerely for the same, are unjustly charged to be enemies unto her Majesty and the State." The following account of the publication is given by Hanbury.†

In a dedication to "the brethren throughout England, Wales, and Ireland," after having shortly described the hindrances to the promotion of the gospel, and the advance it had made "these thirty-one years," he asks, "But what hath England answered?" "Surely," he proceeds, "with an impudent forehead she hath said, 'I will not come near the Holy One. And, as for the building of his house, I will not so much as lift up a finger towards that work; nay, I will continue the desolations thereof. And if any man speaketh a word in the behalf of this house, or bewaileth the misery of it, I will account him an enemy to my state. As for the gospel and the ministers of it, I have already received all the gospels, and all the ministers that I mean to receive. I have received a reading gospel, and a reading ministry, a pompous gospel, and a pompous ministry; a gospel and ministry that strengtheneth the hands of the wicked in his iniquity; a gospel and a ministry that

* A new Discovery of old Pontifical Practices, 1643, p. 3. Price's Hist. i. 380, 381.

† Hanbury, i. 73—75.

will stoop unto me, and be at my beck either to speak or to be mute when I shall think good. Briefly, I have received a gospel and a ministry that will never trouble my conscience with the sight of my sins; which is all the gospel, and all the ministeries that I mean to receive; and I will make a sure hand that the Lord's house, if I can choose, shall not be otherwise edified than by the hands of such men as bring unto me the foresaid gospel and the foresaid ministry.'"

After this, having touched on the profaneness and impiety of the common people, which "may seem to deserve some excuse," he speaks of those "that would be accounted our prophets and the ministers of the sanctuary," and asks, "Will you see what they are? Alas, you can behold here no other sight but a multitude of desperate and forlorn atheists, that have put the evil day far from them, and endeavoured to persuade their own hearts that God's holy ministry, and the saving health of men's souls, are matters not to be regarded: Lord archbishops and bishops, godless and murdering nonresidents — profane and ignorant idol shepherds, or dumb dogs. I will say no more in this place, but this—How long, Lord, just and true, dost thou suffer thine inheritance to be polluted and laid waste by this uncircumcised generation! O Thou that hearest prayer, let the supplications which thy children have made before thee day and night, for the removing of this our plague, be at length effectual in thine ears, and with speed thrust these caterpillars, as one man, out of our church, and let the memory of them be forgotten in Israel for ever. So be it, Lord, for thy Son Christ's sake." Turning to the magistracy, he says, "they, having suffered themselves to

be led by the forenamed blind guides, must needs stumble at that stone which is offensive unto their leaders." As to their honours, the lords of the council, he adds, "as they have held on since the beginning of her majesty's reign, so, at this day, they have taken greater boldness, and grown more rebellious against the Lord and his cause than ever they were."

"For the further understanding of this particular occasion moving me to write, thou art to understand, beloved in the Lord, that within these few months, a warrant, under six councillors' hands, hath been given out from their honours, and sent by public messengers unto all such places of the land, as there was any likelihood of mine abode. The effect whereof was this—'That one John Penry is an enemy to the state, and if not taken for such heretofore, they should now take knowledge and information thereof from them, and so henceforth account him, ... that, if they can by any means apprehend or lay hold of him, they shall therein do her majesty good service.' The names of their honours, I do for the reverence which I owe unto her majesty's government, conceal, save only 'John Cant,' as he writeth himself, whom both in respect of his anti-christian prelacy over God's church, and for the notable hatred which he hath ever betrayed towards the Lord and his truth, I think one of the dishonourablest creatures under heaven, and accordingly do account of him. Desiring the Lord, if it be his will, to convert both him and all other the detected enemies of Sion, that their souls may be saved; or, if he hath appointed them to damnation, and meaneth not otherwise to be glorified by them, speedily to disburden the earth of such reprobate

cast-aways. . . . . I am accounted an enemy unto our *state*, for no other suspicion and colour, but only because I have, by public writing, laboured to defend and induce in our church, that uniform order of church regiment, which our Saviour, Christ, hath ordained in his Word, to continue perpetually therein; and also, have endeavoured to seek the utter ruin and overthrow of that wicked hierarchy of lord bishops, together with whatsoever corruption dependeth thereupon. Now, that I cannot be charged of enmity to our state for any other cause than that which I have expressed, I make it clear in that my bringing up, having been all the days of my life at my studies, I never as yet dealt in any cause, more or less, that any ways concerneth the civil state and government. And therefore whatsoever enemies the Lord hath raised up against me—a contemplative worm for the maintenance of his truth, be they noble or unnoble, councillors or inferior men, I am so far from fearing their power, that the more I see them rage, the greater strength I see reached unto me by the Lord's free mercies, to stand to the truth which they rave against. . . . Where I say, that professors should labour strongly to have our hierarchy and contemptible idols rooted out of our church, my meaning is, not that any private strength should so much as lift up a hand, much less use any violence against these caterpillars; but I mean, that we should more vehemently labour with the Lord by prayers, and by reforming ourselves and our families, and deal earnestly with her majesty and their honours that our cause may be equally heard."

From this it is evident how deeply Penry felt for the unhappy condition of the nation, and how resolute

he was in seeking its welfare. Like all his brethren, however, at this period, he looked too much to the queen and her government to effect a reformation. It was by the interference of the secular power that all the evils he deprecated had been introduced into the country; neither was it likely that any great change for the better would be effected until the people acquire more liberty. What was really wanted was, that the truly religious should be allowed to carry out amongst themselves and all who were willing to reap the benefit of their services, those plans which were sanctioned by the Word of God. By appealing to the government to do this, a right was conceded to the state which might be, and ever was, injuriously exercised. It was strange that Penry and his predecessors did not endeavour to place this matter in a clearer light. Much as Browne has been maligned, we think there are proofs that his views on this subject were more correct than those of the Barrowists and others, who, on account of his defection, were unwilling to bear the stigma of his name.

In what manner Penry employed himself during his exile in Scotland, we are not fully informed. From the language which has already been referred to,* we conclude that he was neither idle, nor altogether without success in the propagation of the gospel in that country. His thoughts, however, continually reverted to his own country and to England, where there were so many with whom he could fully sympathise, and whose interests lay so near to his heart. A proof of this is afforded by the "observations" which he drew up while he was in Scotland,

* See back, p. 121.

and which he designed to embody in a second part of his former work, referred to a little way back;* as well as in the determination which he formed of returning to England and laying his thoughts before her majesty. It is probable, also, that whilst in Scotland he wrote to Lord Burghley,† and was encouraged by the manner in which his letters had been received, to proceed in that determination; the result of which, however, was his own ruin.

In 1593, Penry returned to England, resolved to present a petition to the queen, respecting "the abuses of the church of England," and to request permission to preach the gospel in his native land. He repaired to London, and had some intercourse with the Barrowists. Their leaders had just suffered capital punishment. But Penry was not to be turned from his purpose. From the manner in which he wrote afterwards to those who survived, it is evident that he was well acquainted with all that concerned them, and had joined their fellowship as much as circumstances would permit. His enemies however were on the watch for their prey, and soon after his arrival, or in the month of April,‡ apprehended him at Step-

* In the conclusion of that treatise, from the introductory part of which we have made extracts, Penry writes, "The second part of this book shall be published as soon as the Lord gives me opportunity. I have been enforced, for some causes, to end this more abruptly than I would have wished." As that treatise, however, was published in 1590, the "observations" might be something additional,—the result of his thoughts in Scotland.

† In his letter to Burghley, after his conviction, he reminds his lordship, "with thankfulness," that he had "been always open to receive the writings which I have presumed to send unto you from time to time."

‡ Neal says *May*, but this cannot be.

ney, through the instrumentality of the vicar of that parish.* Stepney has been associated in every period with the history of the Independents. Being at a short distance from London, and surrounded by fields and groves of trees, it was a convenient resort for those who sought a place of retirement from their persecutors.† Even at this time there were in all probability many Barrowists resident in the village. From these, or from those wh were acquainted with their proceedings, the vicar might obtain information respecting Penry. On his apprehension, which was suddenly effected, his papers were seized, and he was committed to prison.

From the moment of his apprehension, Penry seemed to anticipate his fate. He had no fear however; but calmly awaited the result of his trial, writing to his wife "a tender and most Christian letter," and a more lengthy one to his brethren in London, from whom he was now separated. The latter is worthy of being recorded as an admirable specimen of his faith and prudence in this period of trial. It is as follows :—

"*To the distressed, faithful Congregation of Christ in London, and all the Members thereof, whether in bonds, or at liberty.—These be delivered :—*

"My beloved brethren, Mr. F. Johnson, Mr. D. Studley, etc., with the rest of you, both men and women; as if I particularly named you all, which stand members

* The name of this vicar we have not ascertained.

† For a further account of Stepney, see the preface to Mead's original Sermons on the Jews, by Sir T. W. Blomefield, Bart.; also, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of the late Rev. Joseph Fletcher, D.D., pp. 310, 311.

of this poor afflicted congregation, whether at liberty or in bonds; Jesus Christ, that great King and Prince of the kings of the earth, bless you, comfort you with His invincible Spirit, that you may be able to bear and overcome these great trials which you are yet, and I with you, if I live,—to undergo for his name's sake in this testimony.

"Beloved,—Let us think our lot and portion more than blessed, that now are vouchsafed the favour not only to know and profess, but also to suffer for the sincerity of the gospel; and let us remember, that great is our reward in heaven if we endure unto the end.

"I testify unto you for mine own part, as I shall answer before Jesus Christ and his elect angels, that I never saw any truth more clear and undoubted than this witness wherein we stand. 1. Against false Offices; 2. the Callings; 3. the Works; 4. the Maintenance left and retained, in this Land, by and from Popery; 5. against the Obedience which spiritually, either in soul or in body, is yielded, and the Communion that is had, with these inventions of darkness; 6. the Mingling of all sorts, in these Assemblies; 7. the Worship done, but scant, in one of the three parts of the Commission given by our Saviour; scant done, I say, in one of the three parts of the Commission, by the best Teachers of this Land. And I thank my God, I am not only ready to be bound and banished, but even to die in this cause, by His strength; yea, my brethren, I greatly long, in regard of myself, to be dissolved, and to live in the blessed kingdom of heaven, with Jesus Christ and his angels; with Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, David, Jeremy, Daniel, Paul, the great

apostle of the Gentiles, and the rest of the holy saints, both men and women; with the glorious kings, prophets, and martyrs and witnesses of Jesus Christ, that have been from the beginning of the world; particularly with my two dear brethren, Mr. Henry Barrowe, and Mr. John Greenwood, which have, last of all, yielded their blood for this precious 'Testimony:' confessing unto you, my brethren and sisters, that if I might live upon the earth the days of Methuselah twice told, and that in no less comfort than Peter, James, and John, were in the mount; and, after this life, might be sure of 'the Kingdom of Heaven,' that yet, to gain all this, I durst not go from the former 'Testimony.'

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I beseech you be of like mind herein with me. I doubt not but you have the same 'precious faith' with me; and are partakers also of far more glorious comfort than my barren and sinful soul can be. Strive for me, and with me, that the Lord our God may make me, and us all, able to end our course with joy and patience. Strive also, that he may stay his blessed hand, if it be his good pleasure, and not make any further breach in his church, by the taking away of any more of us as yet, to the discouraging of the weak, and the lifting up of the horn of our adversaries.

"I would indeed, if it be His good pleasure, live yet with you, to help you to bear that grievous and hard yoke which yet ye are like to sustain, either here, or in a strange land.

"And, my good brethren, seeing banishment, with loss of goods, is likely to betide you all, prepare yourselves for this hard entreaty; and rejoice that you are made worthy for Christ's cause, to suffer, and

bear all these things. And, I beseech you, 'in the bowels of Jesus Christ,' that none of you, in this case, look upon his particular estate; but regard the general state of the church of God, that the same may go, and be kept together, whithersoever it shall please God to send you. Oh, the blessing will be great that shall ensue this care; whereas if you go every man to provide for his own house, and to look for his own family—first neglecting poor Sion; the Lord will set his face against you and scatter you from one end of heaven to the other; neither shall you find a resting-place for the soles of your feet, or a blessing upon any thing you take in hand!

"The Lord, my brethren and sisters, hath not forgotten to be gracious unto Sion; you shall yet find days of peace and of rest, if you continue faithful. This stamping and treading of us under his feet, this subverting of our cause and right in judgment, is done by Him, to the end that we should search and try our ways, and repent us of our carelessness, profaneness, and rebellion in his sight; but he will yet maintain the cause of our souls, and redeem our lives if we return to him; yea, he will be with us in fire and water and will not forsake us, if our hearts be only intent on the serving of him, and especially of the building of Sion, whithersoever we go.

"Let not those of you, then, that either have stocks in your hands, or some likely trades to live by, dispose of yourselves where it may be most commodious for your outward estate, and, in the mean time, suffer the poor ones that have no such means, either to bear the whole work upon their weak shoulders, or to end their days in sorrow and mourning, for want of outward and inward comforts, in the land of

strangers; for the Lord will be an avenger of all such dealings. But consult with the whole church, yea, with the brethren of other places, how the church may be kept together and built, whithersoever they go. Let not the poor and the friendless be forced to stay behind here, and to break a good conscience for want of your support and kindness unto them, that they may go with you.

"And here, I humbly beseech you—not in any outward regard, as I shall answer before my God,—that you would take my poor and desolate widow, and my mess of fatherless and friendless orphans with you into exile, whithersoever you go; and you shall find, I doubt not, that the blessed promises of my God made unto me and mine will accompany them, and even the whole church, for their sakes; for this also is the Lord's promise unto the holy seed; as you shall not need much to demand what they shall eat, or wherewith they shall be clothed; and in short time, I doubt not, but they will be found helpful and not burthensome to the church: only, I beseech you, let them not continue after you in this land, where they must be forced to go again into Egypt; and my God will help you even with a joyful return into your own country for it. There are of you who, I doubt not, will be careful of the performance of the will of your dead brother, in this point, who may yet live to show this kindness unto yours; I will say no more.

"Be kind, loving, and tender hearted, the one of you towards the other; labour every way to increase love, and to show the duties of love one of you towards another; by visiting, comforting, and relieving one the other; even for 'the reproach of the heathen,' that are round about us, as the Lord said, be watch-

ing in prayer, especially remember those of our brethren that are especially endangered; particularly those our two brethren, Mr. Studley and Robert Bowl, whom our God hath strengthened now to stand in the fore front of the battle. I fear me, that our carelessness was over great to sue unto our God for the lives of these two so notable lights of his church, who now rest with him, and that as he took them away for many respects seeming good to his wisdom; so also that we might learn to be more careful in prayer in all such causes. Pray for them, my brethren; and for our brother *Mr. Francis Johnson;* and for me, who am likely to end my days either with them or before them;—that our God may spare us unto his church, if it be his good pleasure, or give us exceeding faithfulness: and be every way comfortable unto the sister and wife of the dead; I mean, unto my beloved Mr. Barrowe and Mr. Greenwood; whom I most heartily salute, and desire much to be comforted in their God; who, by his blessings from above, will countervail unto them the want of so notable a brother and a husband.

"I would wish you earnestly to write, yea, to send, if you may, to comfort the brethren in the west and north countries, that they faint not in these troubles; and that also you may have their advice, and they of yours, what to do in these desolate times. And if you think it anything for their further comfort and direction, send them, conveniently, a copy of this my letter, and of the declaration of my faith and allegiance; wishing them, before whomsoever they be called, that their own mouths be not had in witness against them, in anything. Yea, I would wish you and them to be together, if you may, whithersoever you shall be

banished; and to this purpose, to bethink you beforehand where to be; yea, to send some who may be meet to prepare you some resting-place. And, be all of you assured, that He who is your God in England, will be your God in any land under the whole heaven; for the earth and the fulness thereof are his, and blessed are they that for his cause are bereaved of any part of the same.

"Finally, my brethren, the eternal God bless you and yours, that I may meet with you all, unto my comfort, in the blessed kingdom of heaven. Thus, having from my heart, and with tears, performed, it may be, my last duty towards you in this life, I salute you all in the Lord, both men and women; even those whom I have not named, as heartily as those whose names I have mentioned; for all your names I know not. And, remember to stand steadfast and faithful in Jesus Christ, as you have received him, unto your immortality; and may He confirm and establish you to the end, for the praise of his glory. Amen.

"Your loving brother in the patience and sufferings of the gospel, John Penry; a witness of Christ in this life, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

"The twenty-fourth of the fourth month, April, 1593." *

On Penry's apprehension, it was intended to indict him for the books which had been published in his name. By the advice of his counsel, however, he drew up a "declaration," dated May, 16th, to the effect that he was "not in danger of the law for the books published in his name." In this declaration he observed,

* Examination of Barrow, Greenwood, and Penry. Marshall, p. 45; Hanbury, i. 75—78.

that the statute of the 23rd of Elizabeth was not intended to be applicable to such as wrote against the hierarchy of the church only, for then it must condemn many of the most learned protestants at home and abroad, but to such as defamed her majesty's royal person. He, however, had always written most dutifully of her majesty's person and government, having never encouraged sedition or insurrection against her majesty, but the contrary: nor had he ever been at any "assembly or conventicle where any under or above the number of twelve were assembled, with force of arms or otherwise, to alter anything established by law." Nor was it his opinion that private persons should, of their own authority, attempt any such thing.*

In order to avoid the legal argument which might arise from this "declaration," the Lord Chief Justice Popham set it aside, and instead of receiving the indictment on the books which Penry had published, took it on the draft of a *petition*, and some private *observations*, referred to before, which had been drawn up in Scotland, and were found among his papers. The heads of the petition were as follows,

"The last days of your reign are turned rather against Jesus Christ and his gospel, than to the maintenance of the same.

"I have great cause of complaint, *madam;* nay, the Lord and his church have cause to complain of your government; because we, your subjects, this day, are not permitted to serve our God under your government according to his *word*, but are sold to be bond-slaves, not only to our affections, to do what we

* Strype's Whitgift, ii. 181; Neal, i. 377.

will, so that we keep ourselves within the compass of established civil laws, but also to be servants to the *man of sin*, and his ordinances.

"It is not the force that we seem to fear that will come upon us (for the Lord may destroy both; you for denying, and us for slack-seeking of his will), by strangers: I come unto you with it: if you will hear it, our cause may be eased; if not, that posterity may know that you have been dealt with, and that this age may know that there is no expectation to be looked for at your hands.

"Among the rest of the princes under the gospel, that have been drawn to oppose it, you must think yourself to be one; for until you see this, *madam*, you see not yourself, and they are but sycophants and flatterers whoever tell you otherwise. Your standing is and has been by the gospel. It is little beholden to you for anything that appears. The practice of your government shows, that if you could have ruled without the gospel, it would have been doubtful whether the gospel should be established or not; for now that you are established in your throne by the gospel, you suffer it to reach no farther than the end of your sceptre limiteth unto it.

"If we had had queen *Mary's* days, I think we should have had as flourishing a church this day as ever any; for it is well known that there was then in *London*, under the burden, and in exile, more flourishing churches than any now tolerated by your authority.

"Now, whereas we should have your help both to join ourselves with the true church, and reject the false, and all the ordinances thereof, we are in your kingdom permitted to do nothing; but accounted se-

ditious, if we affirm either the one or the other of the former points; and therefore, *madam*, you are not so much an adversary to us poor men, as unto Jesus Christ, and the wealth of his kingdom.

"If we cannot have your favour, but by omitting our duty to God,* we are unworthy of it; and, by God's grace, we mean not to purchase it so dear.

"But, *madam*, thus much we must needs say, that in all likelihood, if the days of your sister queen *Mary*, and her persecution, had continued unto this day, that the church of God in *England* had been far more flourishing than at this day it is; for then, *madam*, the church of God within this land, and elsewhere, being strangers, enjoyed the ordinances of God's holy word, as far as then they saw.

"But since *your majesty* came unto your crown, you have had whole Christ Jesus, God and man; but we must serve him only in heart.

"And if those days had continued to this time, and those lights risen therein, which by the mercy of God have shined in *England*, it is not to be doubted but the church of *England*, even in England, had far surpassed all the reformed churches in the world.

"Then, *madam*, any of our brethren durst not have been seen within the tents of antichrist; now they are ready to defend them to be the Lord's, and that he has no other tabernacle upon earth but them. Our brethren then durst not temporize in the cause of God, because the Lord ruled himself in his church, by his own laws, in a good measure; but now, behold! they may do what they will, for any sword that the church has to draw against them, if they contain themselves within your laws.

"This peace, under these conditions, we cannot en-

joy ; and therefore, for anything that I can see, queen *Mary's* days will be set up again, or we must needs temporize. The whole truth we must not speak ; the whole truth we must not profess. Your *state* must have a stroke above the truth of God.

"Now, *madam*, your majesty may consider what good the church of God hath taken at your hands, even outward peace, with the absence of Christ Jesus in his ordinances; otherwise as great troubles are likely to come as ever were in the days of your sister.

"As for the council and clergy, if we bring any suit unto them, we have no other answer but that which *Pharaoh* gives to the Lord's messengers, touching the state of the church under his government.

"For when any are called for this cause before your council, or the judges of the land, they must take this for granted, once for all, that the uprightness of their cause will profit them nothing, if the law of the land be against them ; for your council and judges have so well profited in religion, that they will stick to say, that they come not to consult whether the matter be with or against the *word* or not, but their purpose is to take the penalty of the transgressions against your laws.

"If your council were wise, they would not kindle your wrath against us ; but, *madam*, if you give ear to their words, no marvail though you have no better counsellors."*

It should be remembered that this is only a rough copy of the petition which Penry had intended to present to the queen. Undoubtedly it expresses his

* Life of Whitgift, p. 411 ; Neal, i. 375—377.

sentiments; but many things would have been worded differently before its presentation.

The "observations" were of a miscellaneous nature; being notes hurriedly made of objections which he had heard in Scotland against the queen's government; and which he intended to have examined afterwards at leisure; together with private memoranda respecting his own state of mind, similar to the diaries of good men in various periods.*

On such materials as these Penry was tried. His examination was conducted with great sharpness, and his answers to many of the questions put to him, confirmed his persecutors in their determination to make him their victim.† During the course of the trial, he wrote the following confession, and delivered it to Mr. Justice Young. He calls it his "Confession of faith and allegiance unto the Lord and her majesty, written since my imprisonment."

"Touching my faith, I do believe with my heart, and confess with my tongue, that there is no God but the true God only, which that written word teacheth, to be one in substance and three in person, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; three distinct persons of one and the self same substance. This most high God, who also is my God in Christ Jesus, I believe to be the Creator, Preserver, Maintainer, Sovereign,

* See his own description of the observations farther on.

† In his examination, addressing Popham, he said, "I am bound to seek the comfort of the word and sacraments, where I may have them without submitting to any other ecclesiastical government than that which is derived from Jesus Christ . . . . The church of Christ, in all its affairs, is perfect without archbishops, lord-bishops, archdeacons, &c.; the state, being a civil community, is perfect without them."—Exam. Marshall, p. 39.

Lord, and Supreme Commander of all creatures in heaven and on earth,—men and angels, both good and bad.

"I do believe, that nothing doth or can come to pass, either in heaven or on earth, but by the fore-appointed and determinate will, purpose, counsel, direction—yea, without the most holy, most wise and upright commandments, according to the counsel of His own will.

"All men, by nature, I believe to be the children of wrath, and saved only by grace;—the sufferings and righteousness of Christ Jesus apprehended by true faith.

"Christ Jesus, in regard of his natures, I believe to be God and man; even God alone, blessed for evermore. And in respect of his offices, to be the only king, priest, and prophet of his church; the which offices he so fully accomplished in the days of his flesh, by the manifesting of the whole will of his Father, through his preaching and teaching the full redemption of his church by his death and resurrection; and receiving full absolute power in heaven and on earth from his Father, in such sort, as he is not to retain a successor in any of these his offices, but is consecrated alone to them all for evermore.

"True faith, I believe to be the persuasion of the heart, whereby the soul is truly assured of remission of sins, and imputation of righteousness through Christ. This true faith belongeth only to God's elect, and hath perseverance unto the end. With this true faith also, is unseparably joined, as the fruit thereof, a dying unto sin, and a living unto righteousness, in such sort, that the members of Christ have a continual battle in them against sin; the which, by the

power of Christ's death is so wounded,—and in some measure decayeth more and more in them,—until, at length, it shall be utterly consumed when their bodies and souls be separated, and not before.

"By the quickening power of Christ, I do believe, that *His*, here upon earth, are drawn, more and more to be like his blessed will, and to practice the same; yea, to give their lives, rather than to dishonour their God in the will, and voluntary denial of his truth, and the breach of his laws and will in any point revealed unto them.

"His revealed will, I believe to be perfectly contained in the written word of the Old and New Testament, given by the Holy Ghost for instruction and comfort of his poor church, as long as the same is a pilgrim here upon the earth.

"This church, I believe to be a company of those whom the Word calleth "Saints;" which do not only profess in word that they know God, but also are subject unto his laws and ordinances indeed. With this church, I do believe, that the Lord God, of his mere favour, hath entered into covenant that he will be their God, and they shall be his people. The seals of this his covenant are only two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

"The church here upon earth, I do believe not to perfect,--although in regard of the order which the Lord hath appointed for the same it be most absolute, —but have many blemishes and wants in it. Yet I assuredly believe, that all the true members thereof shall, at the day of judgment, receive their perfect consummation by Jesus Christ, and be crowned in him with eternal glory, of his mere grace, and not for any merit of theirs.

"Subscribed with heart and hand, by me, John Penry, now in strait bonds for the former testimony of Christ's truth."*

This document, however, had little or no weight with his judges. He was convicted on the 21st of May.

Immediately after his conviction, he wrote to the lord treasurer, complaining of the injustice of the trial and the insufficiency of the evidence on which he was convicted; but, in the spirit of a loyal subject, and a courageous Christian, who was not afraid to die. The letter was as follows:—

"Vouchsafe, I beseech your lordship, to read and duly weigh the writing herein enclosed. My days, I see, are drawing to an untimely, and I thank God, an undeserved end, except the Lord my God shall stir up your honour, or some other, to plead my cause, and to acquaint her majesty with my guiltless estate. How clear I am of that heinous crime, especially now intended against me, this my writing doth declare.

"The cause is most lamentable that the private observations of any student, being in a foreign land, and wishing well to his prince and country, should bring his life, with blood, unto a violent end; especially seeing they are most private, and so imperfect, as they have no coherence at all in them, and in most places carry no true English. If I may crave so much favour of your lordship, as to procure that her majesty before I be farther proceeded with, may be acquainted with this true testimony of the affection and loyalty which I have ever carried towards her

* Exam. Marshall, p. 40; Hanbury, i. 80, 81.

highness, I shall intreat the Lord that you may not want your reward for this work. I know there is none that can take hold of me; and yet I refer myself wholly to her determination, and will be contented with the sentence which the Lord shall move her to give me.

"Though mine innocency may stand me in no stead before an earthly tribunal, yet I know that I shall have the reward hereof before the judgment-seat of the great King. And the merciful Lord, who relieveth the widow and fatherless, will reward my desolate orphans and friendless widow that I leave behind me, and even hear their cry, for he is merciful.

"Being likely to trouble your lordship with no more letters, I do with thankfulness acknowledge your honor's favour towards me, in that you have been always open to receive the writings which I have presumed to send unto you from time to time. And in this my last, I protest before the Lord God, that I have written nothing but truth unto your lordship in any of my letters, that I know of.

"Thus, preparing myself, not so much for an unjust verdict, and an undeserved doom in this life, as unto that blessed crown of glory which of the great mercy of my God, is ready for me in heaven, I humbly betake your lordship unto the hands of the just Lord. May 22nd, 1593. Your lordship's most humble in the Lord, John Penry."*

The "writing" referred to at the commencement of this letter as being "herein inclosed," was a *protestation* in which he gives a faithful account of him-

* Strype's Whitgift, ii. 184; Price's Hist. i. 413—415.

self, his writings, and his aims, and yet further vindicates his own innocency. Referring to the document Mr. Hallam observes, "Penry's protestation at his death is in a style of the most affecting and simple eloquence."* We have already given one extract from it: the chief part of the remainder is as follows:—

"In these my intercepted writings, which are now brought against me, containing in them not only a particular record of my daily corruptions, for and against the which I craved mercy and strength at the Lord's hands; but also of all the special sins whereof my conscience could accuse me in all my life, even unto the day of my coming out of Scotland; it will easily appear whether my soul was ever privy unto any offence committed by me against her majesty; save only this (whereof I here complain), namely, that I was not so careful in praying for her preservation and welfare as I desired and laboured to have been. And yet, I thank the Lord, I remember not that that day hath passed over my head, since under her government I first came unto the knowledge of the truth, wherein I have not commended her estate unto his *Majesty*. I deal in these my most secret papers without guile; as in his sight, whom I know to be the revealer of secrets, and at hand. I craved the healing of a bruised conscience. Wherefore it concerned me not to collude

* Hallam's Const. Hist. i. 278, note. He adds, however, "It is a striking contrast to the coarse abuse for which he suffered. The authors of Martin Mar-prelate were never fully discovered; but Penry seems not to deny his concern in it." Hallam is less careful than usual in making this statement, as well as in the text. Penry was *not tried* on the charge of being concerned in Martin's doings; which, coupled with Udal's testimony, is sufficient to prove that he was not *now* "suspected" of being so. Many other reasons might be mentioned, if needful.

with him, though I might do the same with man. Such dealing might well augment the intolerable burden of my wearied soul; but cure my wound it could not. And therefore I may truly say, if ever I had been guilty of any such crime, that there it would have been set down, even when I poured the very secrets of my heart before the mercy-seat of the *Ever Living*.

"Well, I may be indicted, arraigned, condemned, and end the days of my wearisome pilgrimage as a felon—yea, or traitor against my natural sovereign; but I thank my God, heaven and earth shall not be able to convict me thereof. And I thank God, that whensover an end of my days comes, as I look not to live this week to an end, mine innocency shall benefit so much, as I shall die queen Elizabeth's most faithful subject, even in the conscience of my very adversaries themselves, if they will be the beholders thereof.

"I never took myself for a rebuker, much less for a reformer, of states and kingdoms; far was that from me; yet in the discharge of my conscience all the world must bear with me, if I prefer my testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ before the favour of any creature. An enemy unto any good order and policy, either in church or commonwealth, was I never. All good learning and knowledge of the arts and tongues I laboured to attain unto, and to promote to the uttermost of my power. Whatsoever I wrote in religion, the same I did simply, for no other end than for the bringing of God's truth to light. I never did anything in His cause (Lord, thou art witness!) for contention, vain-glory, or to draw disciples after me; or to be accounted singular. Whatsoever I wrote or held beside the warrant of the *written Word,* I have always warned all men to leave. And wherein I saw

that I had erred myself, I have, as all this land doth now know, confessed my ignorance, and framed my judgment and practice according to the truth of the Word.

"That brief confession of my faith and allegiance unto the Lord and her majesty, written since my imprisonment, and delivered to the worshipful Mr. Justice Young, I take, as I shall answer before Jesus Christ and the elect angels, to contain nothing but God's eternal verity in it. And, therefore, if my blood were an ocean sea, and every drop thereof were a life unto me, I would give them all, by the help of the Lord, for the maintenance of the same, my confession. Yet if any error can be showed therein, that will I not maintain. Otherwise, far be it that either the saving of an earthly life; the regard which in nature I ought to have to the desolate outward state of a poor friendless widow, and four poor fatherless infants, whereof the eldest is not above four years old, which I am to leave behind me; or any other outward thing, should enforce me, by the denial of God's truth, contrary to my conscience, to lose * mine own soul. The Lord, I trust, will never give me over unto this sin. Great things in this life I never sought for, not so much as in thought. A mean and base outward state, according to my mean condition, I was content with. Sufficiency I have had, with great outward troubles; but most contented I was with my lot; and content I am, and shall be, with my undeserved and timely death: beseeching the Lord, that it be not laid to the charge of any creature in this land. For I do, from my heart, forgive all those that seek my life, as I de-

* *Leese* in the original.

sire to be forgiven in the day of strict account; praying for them, as for my own soul, that although upon earth we cannot accord, we may yet meet in heaven unto our eternal comfort and unity; where all controversies shall be at an end. And if my death can procure any quietness to the church of God or the state, I shall rejoice. Many such subjects I wish unto my prince; though no such reward unto any of them.

"My earnest request is, that her majesty may be acquainted with these things before my death, or at least after my departure.

"Subscribed with the heart and the hand, which never devised or wrote anything to the discredit or defamation of my sovereign, queen Elizabeth: I take it on my death, as I hope to have a life after this.

"By me, John Penry." *

This affecting protestation had no effect. Whitgift was bent upon adding Penry to the number of his victims. All haste was made to accomplish his object. On the 25th of May, Penry was sentenced to die as a felon; and four days after was executed.

"It was never known before this time," says Neal, "that a minister and a scholar was condemned to death for private papers found in his study; nor do I remember more than one since that time, in whose case it was given for law, that *scribere est agere*,* that to write has been construed an overt act. But Penry must die, right or wrong. The archbishop was the first man who signed the warrant for his execution. The warrant was sent immediately to the

* Strype's Whitgift; App. iv. 18, p. 176.

† To write is to act.

sheriff, who the very same day erected a gallows at St. Thomas Waterings; and while the prisoner was at dinner, sent his officers to bid him make ready, for he must die that afternoon. Accordingly, he was carried to the place of execution; when he came thither, the sheriff would not suffer him to speak to the people, nor make any profession of his faith towards God, or his loyalty to the queen, but ordered him to be turned off in a hurry about five of the clock in the evening, May 29th, 1593, in the thirty-fourth year of his age." *

It has been affirmed by some that, before his death, Penry confessed himself worthy of the sentence passed upon him. "I have received it," says Cotton, from Mr. Hildersham, a man of a thousand, that Mr. Penry did ingenuously acknowledge before his death, that though he had not deserved death for any dishonour put upon the queen by that work which was found in his study, and intended by himself to be presented to her own hand; nor by the compiling of Martin Mar-prelate,—of both which he was falsely charged;—yet he confessed he deserved death at the queen's hand, for that he had seduced many of her loyal subjects to a separation from hearing the Word of Life in the parish churches; which, though himself had learned to discern the evil thereof, yet he could never prevail to recover divers of her subjects whom he had seduced; and therefore the blood of their souls was now justly required at his hands."†

Even if Mr. Hildersham had not been "a strong

* Neal, i. 379.

† Cotton's reply to R. Williams, quoted in Hanbury, i. 80; and in Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation, p. 51. The last-mentioned writer receives any statement which tells in any way against the Brownists.

enemy to the Brownists," of which there is no doubt, such a statement as this is utterly unworthy of credence. When did he thus express himself? Was the confession found in those secret papers which were seized in his study; and if so, how was it that it was not adduced against him, or rather as an extenuating circumstance in his favour? The statement, however, implies that this confession was made somewhere immediately before his death; and we again enquire—when? The letter to Lord Burghley and the protestation were composed immediately before his death; and in them there is no such confession. The whole statement is a most disingenuous libel on the character of an intrepid and consistent Christian man.

Penry "died as he had lived, in the consistent expression of Christian principles, and in the confident hope of the glory of his Lord and master."* Although a young man, he was of great service by his talents, zeal, and Christian discretion,† to the cause which he espoused. His presence emboldened his friends, and his genius was feared by his enemies. The circumstance that the Martin Mar-prelate tracts were ascribed to him, proved that he was regarded as a man of unquestioned daring and ability; and yet his own avowed writings, especially his protestation, afforded proof that he was as humble as he was bold, and as ready to die in a just cause as any martyr of past times. Wales lost in him its earliest missionary. England, also, lost one of its most enlightened Christian philanthropists.

* Price's Hist. i. 416.

† Robinson refers to Penry's writings in confirmation of his own enlightened and charitable views respecting those from whom the Independents so widely differed.—Hanbury, i. 259.

CHAPTER V.

THE INDEPENDENTS IN EXILE.

THE odium which attached to the high commissioners through the severities inflicted on Barrowe and Greenwood, and more especially on Penry, was such as to convince the court that it would not be prudent to persist in such an extreme course.* It was evident that the religious convictions of those who were so obnoxious to the bishops were more powerful than the fear of death. It was also evident, that the passive heroism exhibited by such as had suffered the extreme penalty of the law, had won the admiration of the masses of the people, and the sympathy of all who were not bereft of the common feelings of humanity; while their loyalty, evinced in the most unequivocal manner, and on so many occasions, induced most parties to attribute the severe measures taken against them to the vindictiveness of the bishops rather than to any necessity of state. In consequence of this turn of affairs, it was determined, from this time, to change the method of public procedure against the separatists.

From this time, therefore, ecclesiastical offenders were no longer indicted on the statute 23rd of Eliza-

* It is said that the queen herself was displeased when she heard of the devotion and loyalty of the sufferers.—Neal, i. 379.

beth,* which made it treasonable to disobey the ecclesiastical laws of the land; the 35th of Elizabeth being substituted for it. This last statute inflicted banishment, or an "abjuring of the realm," on such as refused to attend their parish church. This change of policy was, in many respects, a great relief for the Independents, and led to some important results. Not only was the way prepared at home for a wider diffusion of scriptural principles; but the liberty enjoyed abroad, by such as were banished, of discussing great principles, and publishing their sentiments to the world, was a necessary preliminary to the further ascertainment and advancement of truth.

At the time when this new line of policy began to be acted upon, most of the gaols, as we have already seen, were crowded. They were now thrown open and cleared, on the condition that the prisoners should leave the country. This was a great relief. Many who had been imprisoned for years were now at liberty; and, although it was a hardship to be compelled to leave their native land, where they had hoped to be still of some service in winning their fellow countrymen over to the cause of truth, it was not without joy and gratitude that they passed from the scenes of oppression and ecclesiastical misrule, to other lands where they might worship God according to the dictates of conscience and the Divine Word. It was evident, however, when these persecuted exiles found themselves as strangers in other countries, that they were indebted to the statesmen, rather than to the ecclesiastical rulers, of the day for the concession

* Two persons, however, suffered the extreme penalty in the next reign, in 1611,—an Arian in London and a Baptist in Lichfield.

which had been granted. One of these exiles informs us that they were followed by letters which decried them to the civil authorities in the Dutch states and elsewhere,* as a discontented, factious, and conceited people who could not be tolerated in their own land, and whom therefore they should treat accordingly. In consequence of this ungenerous procedure, the exiled parties were received with great discourtesy, and in many cases were subject to the most unmerited obloquy, in the various towns and cities to which they repaired. This was more especially the case with the Independents. Such as were in favour of presbyterian views found many parties abroad prepared to sympathise with them, on account of identity of principles; but the Brownists and Barrowists were "a people every where spoken against."

In these statements we refer mainly to the band of exiles who left their country when the new policy was first adopted. In the course of a year from this period, fresh prisoners filled the gaols; and from time to time fresh exiles passed over to join their brethren. The very policy employed, emboldened many to avow their sentiments who had cherished them in secret before; and probably many parties felt that it would be preferable on the whole to act an obnoxious part with the prospect of banishment, rather than to remain at home as suspected parties in continual fear of apprehension.

Although it is not a part of our plan to enter into

* Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, Leyden, and Utrecht, were the principal cities of refuge for the persecuted exiles.

minute details respecting the history of those parties who were driven from their home and country to foreign lands, it is but right that our readers should be acquainted with the principal particulars, more especially such as had an influence in advancing the determination of right principles, and in giving an impulse to the cause of Independency at home.

Among the first body of exiles was one whose name has already been mentioned, and whose character and talents were such as to require specific notice. We refer to Francis Johnson. Of his early history nothing has reached us. He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow. While at Cambridge he imbibed puritan or presbyterian principles, together with many besides, and publicly advocated them in a sermon preached at St. Mary's, in January, 1588-9. In consequence of this he was called upon to retract what he had advanced, and on refusing to do so was expelled the university in October of the same year. Lord Burghley, who was the chancellor of the university, advised Johnson to make an appeal from this severe decision. But the vice-chancellor and the heads of houses carried matters with a high hand, resisted the attempt, and committed Johnson to prison, without bail, for his alleged contumacy in making it. For a whole year the university was agitated by the proceedings connected with this case. Many of the fellows took the part of Johnson, and remonstrated against the unjust severity of the vice-chancellor. The ecclesiastical party, however, was too powerful, being backed by the sanction and authority of the bishops; and Johnson felt it to be his wisest course

to abandon any further attempts to appeal. On this he was set at liberty.*

After this, or in 1592, Johnson was again apprehended and imprisoned, together with many other leading puritans, for refusing to take the oath *ex officio mero*,† in order to confess to the conduct of themselves and their brethren. Eventually, however, they complied, believing as they did, that there was nothing criminal in their proceedings; and upon so doing they were released.

Up to this period Johnson was a puritan only, had associated with the puritan party in various proceedings in various parts of the kingdom, and had subscribed his name to a book entitled "the Holy Discipline of the Church, described in the Word of God."‡ So far from approving of the conduct of the separatists, he had opposed them, and, as Henry Jacob reminded him afterwards, with some earnestness.§ His sentiments, however, from this time underwent a gradual change. He was led to see that there was as little scriptural warrant for the authority of synods and general assemblies as for that of diocesan bishops; and hence we find him soon after connected with the congregational church in London, whose

* Brook's Puritans, ii. 96.

† This oath, called also a "corporal oath," bound a person taking it to answer any questions that might be put, however criminating the consequences might be.

‡ This book expressed the various particulars of the presbyterian system. It was drawn up by Travers in Latin, in 1574, at Geneva, and afterwards translated into English by Cartwright. It is given in Neal's Appendix, No. II.

§ Hanbury, i. 84.

origin we have related elsewhere. Johnson's accession was of considerable advantage to the cause of Independency.* His character was unimpeachable, and by his enlightened views and his lucid writings, he was the means of winning over some important parties to the cause which he had himself espoused. He settled at Amsterdam with the greater portion of his flock, and was concerned in many controversies, some of them painful ones, to which we shall have occasion to refer more particularly.

In the course of a short time after Johnson's settlement in Holland,† another individual joined him whose abilities were of the first order. This was no less a person than Henry Ainsworth, a man whose vast learning obtained for him a continental reputation. "A higher testimony of the veneration he has acquired by his writings, cannot well be expected, than that which occurs in all the late editions of Moreri's Dictionary, and even in the last;‡ wherein, with great pains, they distinguish between 'Henry Ainsworth, the *able commentator* on the scriptures,' and 'Henry Ainsworth, the *heresiarch*, who was one of the chiefs of the Brownists, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth;' and very gravely tell us that 'we must

* Johnson repudiated the name of "Brownist;" but because of Browne's apostacy only. He admits that Browne's *sentiments* were substantially the same as his. Referring to Browne in one of his publications, he writes, "holding, as we hear, in his judgment, the truth we profess."—Answer to Jacob, chap i. p. 2.

† It seems scarcely probable that Ainsworth belonged to Johnson's church in London. His name does not occur in its history, neither do we find it in the list of those who were imprisoned.

‡ Le Grand Dictionaire Historique, 10 tomes, folio.

have a care not to confound them:' nevertheless, nothing is more certain than that these two were the same man!"*

Nothing certain is known of this distinguished scholar until the period on which we have entered. Where he was born, and obtained his education—what college or university had the honour of sending him forth as one of the first scholars of his age—in what circumstances he first joined the oppressed and persecuted Brownists—are facts involved in obscurity. "Even his very existence," says Hanbury, "is unrecorded before the memorable year 1592-3; after which he is found in close alliance with the church of exiles, 'in a blind lane at Amsterdam.'" On joining the exiles, he was chosen to the office of teacher, in conjunction with Johnson as pastor, and rendered much service to the cause of scriptural truth.

Although there can be little doubt that Ainsworth was an Englishman, it is not known when he left his country and settled in Holland. It appears from his correspondence, that he was there in 1596;† and Hornbeck has related, that he went over from that country to Ireland, where he left some disciples.‡ It is also ascertained, that he was at first and for some time in circumstances of great poverty and obscurity, living upon "ninepence a week, and some boiled roots." § His occupation was that of a bookseller's porter; and his master was the first to discover his skill in the Hebrew language, and make it known to

* Biographia Britanica, vol. i. p. 102.

† Limborch's Epist. Viror. Præstant. et Erudit. Ep. 37.

‡ Summa Controv. p. 740.

§ Cotton's Reply to R. Williams, p. 119.

the world.* Whether he was in this situation when he joined the church of the exiles at Amsterdam, we are not informed. It may, however, have been so; and it shows the good sense of the members of it that they selected such a man as Ainsworth, notwithstanding his poverty, for their teacher. Indeed, the circumstances of the exiles generally were scarcely raised above those of the poorest. They had left their own land with little or nothing. Their property at home had been confiscated, or had melted away under a system of fines and imprisonment. Their maintenance now depended on their industry; and in seeking it, they were obstructed on all hands. The civil authorities tolerated them, but showed no regard for their welfare; while the town's clergy looked down upon them either with jealousy or contempt.

Ainsworth and Johnson, the latter retaining his office as pastor, acted together with great unanimity for a long period. In consequence of the malicious reports which had been circulated respecting the opinions of the Brownists, it was felt needful to give a public statement of their real character and merits. This was the more necessary, inasmuch as there were learned men in Amsterdam, at this period, who were not backward in publishing their own erroneous sentiments. Arminius, whose name is too well known to require further notice, had been appointed a pastor in the same city in 1588, and was at this time very earnest in divulging his peculiar doctrines.† Junius, also, the celebrated controversialist, was using his influence as a divinity professor against them. And many parties,

* Wilson's Dissenting Churches, i. 23.

† For an Account of Arminius and his doctrines, see Mosheim cent. xvii. sect. ii. part ii. chap. iii.

more candid than the rest, were willing to receive further explanations respecting the new party, so much reviled and "spoken against."

It appears that, in 1596, Johnson had published "the confession of faith of certain English people, living in the low countries, exiled." In 1598, this document was republished; and afterwards, in 1602, it was issued again as the joint production of Johnson and Ainsworth. The latter translated it into the Latin, for the benefit of the learned in all countries, and sent it forth in his own name.

This confession, issued under these circumstances, is worthy of notice in this history. We shall, therefore, lay some extracts from it before our readers.*

A reference is made in the preface to the cause for which they were now suffering exile from their native land.

"It may seem strange," said they, "unto thee, Christian reader, that any of the English nation should, for the sake of the gospel, be forced to forsake their native country, and live in exile; especially in these days, when the gospel seemeth to have free passage and to flourish in that land. And for this cause, hath our exile been hardly thought of by many, and evil spoken of by some, who know not, as it seemeth, either the true estate of the church of England, or the causes of our forsaking and separating from the same; but, hearing 'this sect,' as they call it, to be 'everywhere spoken against,' have, without all further search, accounted and divulged us as heretics, or schismatics, at the least; yea, some, and such as worst might,*

* See a more full account in Hanbury.

† e. g. the bishops of the English church.

have sought the increase of our afflictions even here also, if they could; which thing they have both secretly and openly attempted. And though we could, for our parts, well have borne this rebuke of Christ in silence, and left our cause to him who judgeth justly all the children of men; yet, for the manifestation and clearing of the truth of God from reproach of men, and for the bringing of others together with ourselves to the same knowledge and fellowship of the gospel, we have thought it needful, and our duty, to make known unto the world our unfeigned faith in God, and loyal obedience towards our prince, and all governors set over us in the Lord, together with the reasons of our leaving the ministry, worship, and church of England; which are not, as they pretend, for some *few* faults and corruptions remaining, such as we acknowledge may be found in the perfectest church on earth."

After this, they avow their allegiance to the civil government, define the various particulars in respect to which they dissent from the establishment in England, and thus conclude:—"Concerning ourselves, who through the mercy of God have found a place of rest in this land, for which benefit we are always and everywhere thankful, we desire, Christian reader, thy charitable and Christian opinion of and holy prayers unto God for us, whose kingdom we seek, whose ordinances we desire to establish and obey; protesting, with good consciences, that it is the truth of his gospel only for which we strive against those cursed relics of antichristian apostacy; unto which we dare in no wise submit ourselves—no, not for a moment. But because we have been very grievously slandered in our own nation, and the bruit thereof hath followed us unto this land, whereby we have been hardly deemed of by

many without cause, we have been forced, at length to publish this brief but true Confession of our Faith, for the clearing of ourselves from slander, and satisfying of many who desired to know the things we hold."

The confession which follows the above, comprises doctrine and discipline in forty-five articles. The more important of these in relation to our object are those which we now proceed to lay before the reader.

ART. XXIII. "As every Christian congregation hath power and commandment to elect and ordain their own ministry, according to the rules in God's Word prescribed, and whilst they shall faithfully execute their office, to have them in superabundant love for their works' sake, to provide for them, to honour them and reverence them, according to the dignity of the office they execute; so have they also power and commandment when any such default, either in their life, doctrine, or administration, breaketh out, as by the rule of the Word debarreth them from, or depriveth them of their ministry, by due order to depose them from the ministry they exercised;* yea, if the case so require, and they remain obstinate and impenitent, orderly to cut them off by excommunication.

XXIV. "Christ hath given this power to receive in or cut off any member, to the whole body together of every Christian congregation, and not to any one member apart, or to more members sequestered from the whole, or to any other congregation, to do it for them. Yet so as each congregation ought to use the best help they can hereunto, and the most meet member they have, to pronounce the same in their public assembly.

XXV. "Every member of each Christian congre-

gation, how excellent, great, or learned soever, ought to be subject to this censure and judgment of Christ. Yet ought not the church, without great care and due advice, to proceed against such public persons."

After showing the unscriptural nature of the English hierarchy and their ecclesiastical assemblies, and asserting that they "cannot be said, in this confusion and subjection, truly to have Christ *their* Prophet, Priest, and King," the faithful are admonished "with speed to come forth of this antichristian estate; leaving the suppression of it unto the Magistrate to whom it belongeth."

XXXIII. "Being come forth of this antichristian estate, unto the freedom and true profession of Christ, besides the instructing and well-guiding of their own families, they are willingly to join together in Christian communion and orderly covenant, and by free confession of the faith and obedience of Christ, to unite themselves into peculiar and visible congregations; wherein, as members of one body, whereof Christ is the only Head, they are to worship and serve God according to his Word; remembering to keep holy the Lord's day.

XXXIV. "Then, also, such to whom God hath given gifts to interpret the scriptures, tried in the exercise of prophecy, attending to study and learning, may and ought, by the appointment of the congregation, to prophecy, according to the proportion of faith, and so to teach publicly the Word of God, for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church; until such time as the people be meet for, and God manifest men with able gifts and fitness to, such office or offices as Christ hath appointed to the public ministry of his church; but no sacraments to be ad-

ministered until the pastors or teachers be chosen and ordained into their office.

XXXVI. "Thus, being rightly gathered, established, and still proceeding in Christian communion and obedience of the gospel of Christ, none is to separate for faults and corruptions which may, and so long as the church consisteth of mortal men will fall out and arise among them, even in true constituted churches; but by due order to seek redress thereof.

XXXVII. "Such as yet see not the truth, may, notwithstanding, hear the public doctrine and prayers of the church; and with all meekness are to be sought by all means: yet none who are grown in years may be received into their communion as members, but such as do make confession of their faith, publicly desiring to be received as members, and promising to walk in the obedience of Christ: neither any infants, but such as are the seed of the faithful by one of the parents, or under their education and government. And further, not any from one congregation to be received members in another, without bringing certificate of their former estate and present purpose.

XXXVIII. "And, although the particular congregations be thus distinct and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city in itself, yet are they all to walk by one and the same rule; and, by all means convenient, to have the counsel and help one of another in all needful affairs of the church, as members of one body in the common faith, under Christ their only Head.

XLIII. "Unto all men is to be given whatsoever is due to them. Tributes, customs, and all other such lawful and accustomed duties, ought willingly and orderly to be paid and performed; our lands, goods,

and bodies, to be submitted in the Lord to the magistrate's pleasure. And the magistrates themselves every way to be acknowledged, reverenced, and obeyed according to godliness; not because of wrath only, but also for conscience sake: and, finally, all men so to be esteemed and regarded, as is due and meet for their place, age, estate, and condition.

XLIV. "And thus, we labour to give unto God that which is God's, and unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and unto all men that which belongeth unto them; endeavouring ourselves to have always a clear conscience towards God and towards men."

From these extracts it appears that while the Independents of Amsterdam, under Johnson and Ainsworth regarded every Christian congregation or local church as a self-governing body, yet there was a connection between the congregations, in the transfer of members from the church in one locality to that in another, wherever such transfer was needful through change of residence on the part of any of the members. In the thirty-ninth article there is a distinct recognition of the unity of the churches thus related, for purposes of mutual counsel and support.

The thirty-fourth article is perhaps more stringent than is needful in respect to the sacraments, inasmuch as there are scriptural cases in which churches had a church-state before any offices were appointed, and in all probability had the sacraments, as they are termed, administered in their midst.*

The greatest error held by these parties pertains to the third principle of Independency, or that which

* Titus, i. 5, seems to imply that the churches in Crete had the kind of church existence referred to in the text. There was some-

relates to the connection between church and state. In the thirty-ninth article they allow princes and magistrates to "suppress and root out by their authority all false ministries, voluntary religions, and counterfeit worship of God;" and even to "enforce all their subjects, whether ecclesiastical or civil, to do their duties to God and men" It is singular to find this so long maintained by the early Independents; more especially as it is so much at variance with their other opinions, and as they had suffered so much in consequence of it in every period of their history, and even at the very moment when the confession was written.

Although, therefore, there is much in this confession to admire as an exposition of some of the leading principles of Independency, there is abundant proof that much had yet to be discovered. It was not for such men as Ainsworth even, to see the whole truth at once. Educated and trained in erroneous principles, it required time and much collision of mind with mind to arrive at those simple but harmonizing views which the New Testament affords respecting the basis of Christian fellowship and organization. It is with these laws as with those of nature; the most comprehensive and simple are not to be reached at one bound, but by a series of approximations; and where long-standing prejudices intervene, as in the case of the former, the process may be expected to be of longer duration. In this early period, too, there were many practical rules, which had not been determined; rules which although little more than details

thing "wanting," but not church existence. If so, must not the sacraments have been administered by persons appointed to do so for the time being?

in relation to the general question of Independent polity, were of great importance to the orderly and peaceable management of a Christian church. In the history of the apostolic churches we find many troubles arising from a want of actual experience in reference to these matters, and the same kind of trouble arose from time to time in those churches which were the first to return to an apostolic simplicity. In the latter examples these evils were increased by the attempts of enemies to stir up strife where it did not already exist, and to increase and exaggerate it where it did.

The church at Amsterdam was not long at peace, in consequence of various causes. In an excess of charity some parties had been admitted to fellowship who proved to have been unworthy of it, and their exclusion afterwards, gave occasion to animosity and debate. Encouraged by the very weakness of the church which had exercised discipline upon them according to the laws of the New Testament, and favoured by the prelatical party who frowned upon the new principles of church organization and watched for the halting of such as advocated them, they made the most vituperative and mendacious attacks upon both the ministers and members. Had not the pastor and his colleagues publicly exposed the false statements of their libellers, the entire cause would have been irretrievably damaged. As it was, the able defences of Johnson and Ainsworth rebutted the various charges advanced, and thereby promoted the cause of truth.

To enter into minute particulars respecting such matters as these is unnecessary. Suffice it to say that the commencement of division originated with the relatives of Johnson, who were averse to his marriage

with a certain widow: while the episcopalian party made this marriage a reason for maligning the whole church, because it had not been celebrated at their altar; the father and brother of Francis Johnson, for private reasons, kept alive a contention on the subject, which ended, after four or five years' strife, in the expulsion of both from the church. Ainsworth not only took the side of Francis Johnson in this affair, but wrote in defence of his friend—a circumstance sufficient in itself to show that the opposition excited was both uncharitable and vain. Robinson, also, speaks of George Johnson, the brother, as a person quite unworthy of credit, and "a disgraceful libeller," most justly "cast out of our church." At the same time, feeling that such an uncommon state of things in reference to the church might be unfairly urged as an argument against the polity of the church in which he officiated, he adds, "It is to us a just cause of humiliation all the days of our lives, that we have given and do give, by our differences, such advantages to them which seek occasion against us to blaspheme the truth: though this may be a just judgment of God upon others which seek offences, that seeking they may find them to the hardening of their hearts in evil. But let men turn their eyes which way soever they will, they shall see the same scandals. Look to the first and best churches planted by the apostles themselves, and behold dissensions, scandal, strife, biting one of another."*

While these matters were dividing the church from within, various parties were from time to time busied in attacking the system of church polity which had been

* Robinson's Justification, 1610. p. 55.

adopted. Henry Jacob, a man of whom we shall hear more presently, signalized himself by publishing a work expressly against the principles of the Brownists, and in defence of those of the church of England. Not very long after this period he became a convert to the views which he now sought to oppose, probably through the very writings which his own opposition called forth. Jacob's work was printed at Middleburgh, in 1599, and was entitled "A defence of the Churches and Ministry of England. Written in two Treatises, against the reasons and objections of Mr. Francis Johnson, and others of the separation commonly called Brownists." The next year Johnson replied to this work in an admirable, and, as it would appear, convincing manner.* The following extracts from this reply are still worthy of being perused and studied as an admirable compendium of scriptural truths in relation to the "false doctrine of the Church of England and the defenders thereof."

1. "'That though the open, notorious, obstinate offenders be partakers of the sacraments, yet neither the sacraments nor the people that join with them are defiled thereby.'—Which doctrine is contrary to the truth of God in these scriptures:—1 Cor. x. 17; Hag. ii. 14, 15; 1 Cor. v. 6; x. 28; 2 Cor. vi. 14—18; Gal. v. 9; Matt. xviii. 8, 9. 15—19, etc.

2. "'That the planting or reforming of Christ's church must tarry for the civil magistrate, and may not otherwise be brought in by the word and Spirit of God in the testimony of His servants, except they have authority from earthly princes.'—Which doctrine is against the kingly power of Christ, and these scrip-



* An Answer to Master H. Jacob, his Defence, &c., 4to. 1600.

tures:—Matt. xxviii. 18—20; Acts, iii. 23; 1 Cor. i. 27; 1 Cor. xiv. 27, with 1 Thess. iv. 8; Phil. ii. 6—12; 1 Tim. vi. 13—15; Rev. i. 5; xii. 11; xiv. 12; xvii. 14; xix. 16; xx. 4.

3. " 'That the true visible Church of Christ is not a separated company of righteous men and women, from the idolaters, and open wicked of the world; but may consist of all sorts of people, good and bad.'—Which doctrine is contrary to the pattern of Christ's church throughout all the scriptures:—Gen. iv. 26, with vi. 2; Exod. iv. 22, 23, etc.; Matt. iii. 10—12; Acts, ii. 40—42; xix. 9; Rom. xii. 1—8; 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10, etc.

4. "To maintain this error of their confused order and mixture of all sorts of persons together, they pervert the parable of the tares, Matt. xiii. 24; teaching, 'That all are the church, and that they may be retained, and communicated withal, in the church,' which doctrine is against the truth of the scriptures; yea, against our Saviour's own interpretation in the 38th verse, who teacheth that by 'the field' is meant 'the world,' in which his church is militant here on earth. And as herein is the good seed, the righteous, the children of the kingdom,—who, as they are often espied in this life by the righteous servants of God, and being discovered, are here cast out of the church in the name and by the power of Jesus Christ, so shall they, in that great day, be perfectly severed from the godly by the 'angels:' howsoever here, in the mean time making profession of the truth, and having a show of godliness, they be suffered to grow together with the good seed, and be with the upright of heart reputed members of the church on earth. Note, also, that the church, because it is the temple, house, and

kingdom of God on earth, wherein he dwelleth by his spirit, and ruleth by the sceptre of his word, as also 'the gate of heaven,' through which he bringeth us into his kingdom of glory after this life, is therefore by Christ in this place called 'the kingdom of heaven,' though yet it be here in the kingdom of this world:—Matt. xiii. 19, 24, 37, 38, 41, 43, 52, compared with Gen. xxviii. 17; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18; Eph. ii. 21, 22; Matt. viii. 12; xvi. 18, 19, 28; xxi. 43; xxii. 12, 14, etc. And, further, if Christ's meaning were that men should here still bear and partake with the known wicked and profane, notwithstanding that their estate; then by this it would follow that there should neither be use of excommunication in the church, nor punishment of malefactors in the commonwealth; which could not but be the destruction of both, and is directly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles in other scriptures; as, namely, in Matt. xxviii. 17, 18; xxvi. 52; Rom. xiii. 4; 1 Cor. v.; 1 Tim. i. 20. Finally, this their doctrine aforesaid, is against the express commandment of God, the heavenly order of Christ in his Church, and the continual practice of the prophets, apostles, and faithful in all ages: for which see these scriptures, Gen. xvii. 14; xix. 12—16; Lev. xviii. 29, 30; xx. 22—26, etc.; Matt. xviii. 8, 9, 15—18; Acts, ii. 40, 41, 47, etc.

5. "'That the people may tolerate and join with open iniquity in the church, until by the magistrate it be redressed.'—Which doctrine is contrary to these scriptures, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Matt. xxviii. 20; Acts. ii. 40; iii. 23; iv. 19; ix. 26; xix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 22; Deut. v. 32; xii. 32.

6. "'That the gift of interpretation and application

of the scriptures are a sufficient and lawful calling to the ministry, etc.'—Which doctrine is both false and anabaptistical; contrary to the scriptures, Heb. v. 4; Rom. xii. 6—8; Lev. xxii. 25; Acts, i. 20, 26; xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23.

7. "'That the church may yield obedience unto other laws, canons, traditions, officers, and offices, than God hath prescribed in his covenant.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Gen. xlix. 10; Matt. vi. 24; John, x. 4, 5; Rev. xiv. 4, etc.

8. "'That the church may read other men's words upon a book, and offer them to God as their own prayers and sacrifices in the public asemblies.'—Which doctrine is contrary to the scriptures, Isa. xxix. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 26; 1 Cor. xiv. 15; Matt. vi. 6, 9; xv. 9; Mark, vii. 7, etc.

9. "'That it is lawful to join with the ministry of dumb and idol priests, and to receive the sacraments at their hands.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Matt. xv. 14; vii. 15; xxiv. 24, 25, etc.; 1 Tim. iii. 2; vi. 5, etc.

10. "'That it is lawful for a minister of Christ to cease preaching, and forsake his flock, at the commandment of the lord bishops'—which doctrine is contrary to 1 Cor. ix. 16; Isai. lxii. i. 6, 7; Jer. xlviii. 10; Zech. xi. 17; John x. 2—13; Acts iv. 18—20; v. 29; Amos vii. 12—15; 2 Tim. iv. 2.

11. "'That the church of Christ hath not always power to bind and loose, to receive in, and cast out, by the keys of his kingdom.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Math. xviii. 17, 18; Psal. cxlix. 9; 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 12; Num. v. 2, 3.

12. "'That it is lawful for the people of God to hear notorious false prophets in the ministry.'—

Which doctrine is contrary to Deut. xviii. 15; Matt. xvii. 5; vii. 15; 2 John 10, 11; 1 Cor. x. 18; Gal. i. 8, 9; Rev. x. iv. 9; ii. xviii. 4; John x. 5.

13. " 'That it is the church and house of God, the body and kingdom of Christ, where he reigneth not by his own ordinances and officers; but the highest ecclesiastical authority is in the hands of strange lords and anti-christian prelates; who also govern by Romish canons, and not according to the laws of Christ's Testament.'—Which doctrine and practice are condemned by Luke xix. 14—27; John xv. 14; Rom. vi. 16; Luke xxii. 25, 26; 1 Pet. v. 3; 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4, 8; John iii. 35, 36; Rev. ix. 3; xiv. 9—11; xix. 14, 15, 19.

14. " 'That there may be a prescript liturgy and set form of service in the church, framed by man.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Deut. v. 8; Isai. xxix. 13, 14; Matt. xv. 9; Mark vii. 6, 7; Gal. iii. 15; John iv. 24; Rom. viii. 26, 27; Eph. iv. 7, 8; Col. ii. 23.

15. " 'That an anti-christian prelate, notwithstanding his dignity, (as it is called) spiritual, may be a civil magistrate, and obeyed of the people as their lawful governor.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Rom. xiii. 1, etc.; Matt. xx. 25, 26.; Mark x. 42, 43; Luke xxii. 25, 26; Rev. xiv. 9—11; xvii. 14, 16, 18.

16. " 'That men may give the titles of Christ Jesus to these sons of men, his mortal enemies, to call them their archbishops, lord bishops, fathers, lords, etc.'—Which doctrine is contrary to 1 Pet. v. 3, 4, with ii. 25; Matt. xxiii. 8—10; Isai. xlii. 8; xlviii. 11.; Prov. xvii. 15; xxiv. 24; Isai. v. 20; 2 Cor. vi. 14—17.

17. " 'That it is lawful for a minister of Christ to be maintained in his ministry by Jewish and popish

tithes, Christmas offerings, etc.'—Which doctrine is contrary to Heb. vii. 12; 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13; Prov. xxvii. 26, 27; Phil. iv. 10, 18; Rom. xv. 27; Gal. vi. 6.

In this summary of objections to the constitution and practice of the church of England, Johnson suited himself not only to the candid enquirer after truth in general, but particularly to his present opponent. Jacob was a man of independent thought, and very conscientious. He had written in defence of the church of England, because he believed it to be in the main rightly constituted; and had he regarded the matter otherwise, he would have expressed himself as frankly. There is reason to believe that the method adopted by Johnson in the reply now under consideration, materially tended to the production of that change in Jacob's sentiments, the abundant proofs of which we shall notice presently.

While Jacob was opposing the Amsterdam church on one side, others were engaged in the same work on another. Francis Junius, "Divinity Reader at Leyden," was one of them. Having received a copy of the "confession" referred to some pages back, Junius thought it needful to write "to the brethren of the English church," in reply to it. Decrying liberty of private judgment, and recommending quietness on the part of the congregational church, he proceeds to argue against separation from the English church in such a manner as to call forth a reply from the exiles, which again led to further discussion on the part of Junius. Thus a controversy was opened which lasted for some time. The settlers had much the best of the argument, and defended their conduct in a spirited manner. Our limited

space forbids our entering into further particulars. The following extract, however, serves to show how willing the separatists were to have their principles discussed, and how amply they could justify their own proceedings.

"If you write again, we do humbly and earnestly entreat, if any where we have erred in our faith and cause, that you vouchsafe to show it us by the light of God's word. Otherwise it will be suspected, seeing you bestow so much pains in discussing these things which concern the manner, and not the matter itself, that either you do dissemble your judgment, whatsoever it be, or that in very deed you are of the same mind with us; especially seeing now you have written, that you do not entertain any 'prejudice at all' to our cause, and have spoken this 'religiously before the Lord.' Pity, we pray you, our church here exiled, every where reproached, eaten up, in a manner, with deep poverty, despised and afflicted well near of all; against which satan hath now a long time attempted all utmost extremities. Pity them from whom we have departed; who, under pretence of the gospel, continue still in anti-christian defection, and do so stiffly hold, and eagerly maintain it as there is scarce any among them that dare so much as hiss against it. Pity these churches, among whom we sojourn, in which, whether we look at the public prayers, or the administration of the sacraments, or the execution of discipline, there be sundry tares, if they may be called tares; or rather, corruptions, and those also not of small moment; at which, as is reported, the anabaptists and others, not a few, that live here do stumble; of which also we have heretofore conferred friendly with the ministers of these churches, men indeed learned, and

our brethren beloved, but hitherto we do not accord therein, yet hope for better consent hereafter, by the blessing of God, and through the help of you and other godly men. Finally, pity the whole church of Christ, which verily it is not meet nor expedient, neither indeed ought, among so many and grievous wounds of her's universally inflicted, to be further galled with this particular wound, that you should not take it in good part to have, by us, the true faith of Christ published, and the remnants of anti-christ's apostacy discovered."*

We now turn from these discussions abroad, to those events which caused the exiles to revert with hopeful feelings to the land from which they had been driven forth. Tidings respecting their brethren in London and elsewhere, were always grateful to them in their banishment ; and the comparative ease which the puritans and others enjoyed during the latter years of Elizabeth's reign, led them to hope that a better order of things might ensue so soon as her successor might ascend the British throne. In the anticipation of these things, some of the exiles returned to England, and waited breathlessly for the long expected period of liberty and peace. How grievously they were disappointed we proceed to show in another chapter.

* For further particulars respecting this controversy see Hanbury, ii chap. viii.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INDEPENDENTS AND JAMES THE FIRST.

On the death of Queen Elizabeth, in 1603, it was hoped by the Reformers generally, that a new line of policy would be adopted in relation to ecclesiastical affairs in England. Her Majesty's reign, although eminently prosperous in many respects, had been one of great hardship for the puritans and Brownists; and as many reports had been circulated respecting the presbyterian leanings of James, it was confidently believed that his accession to the throne would be the introduction of a new era. In the general assembly of Scotland, in 1590, he had pronounced the church of that country to be perfect, while that of England was nothing better than popish. "Their service," he said, "is an ill-mumbled mass in English; they want nothing of the mass but the liftings." And, as if to prove that he was sincere, he added, "I charge you, my good people, ministers, elders, nobles, gentlemen, and barons, to stand to your purity; and I, forsooth, as long as I brook my life and crown, shall maintain the same against all deadly." This speech was received with universal acclamation by the presbyterians, and the praises of James were celebrated in England almost as widely as in Scotland. Even Whitgift, and the church party entertained the gravest apprehensions respecting the new king. They re-

ferred to his accession under the metaphor a *Scotch mist*, and anticipated with dread the alterations which would be made in the government and liturgy of the church. The real character of the monarch had, in fact, been misunderstood. It was scarcely suspected that he could become so apostate to all his avowed convictions, as he afterwards proved to be. It was not imagined even, that he who had so often been cowed and brow-beaten by the presbyterian clergy in Scotland, * and whose flesh gave signs of fear at the sight of a drawn sword, could play the tyrant in another country, when surrounded by other circumstances. Such, however, was the case. The pedantic and fearful monarch found a clergy made to hand, in England. They suited him in every respect. Their adulation, which was almost idolatrous, told upon his principles much more effectually than any argumentation. The contrast between truthful, honest-spoken presbyterians and these sycophant bishops, determined him at once to abide by his adage

* Mr. Robert Bruce said before his face that "God would raise more Bothwells against him than one, gif he did not revenge God's quarrel against the papists, before his own particular." Andrew Melville, on a certain occasion, took the king by the sleeve, called him "God's sillie vassal," and then addressed him in a strain "the most singular in point of freedom that ever saluted royal ears." Amongst other things, he said, "Therefore, sir, as divers times before I have told you, so now again I must tell you, there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is king James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Jesus Christ, the king of the church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member. We will yield unto you your place, and give you all due obedience; but again I say, you are not the head of the church, you cannot give us that eternal life which we seek for ever in this world, and you cannot deprive us of it."—M'Crie's Life of Melville, i. 391.

of, 'No bishop, no king;' and so things remained, eventually, as they were, or rather waxed worse and worse.

Immediately upon James's accession, all parties sought to interest him in their favour. Petitions and addresses without end poured in upon him before he arrived to take possession of his kingdom. At every stage of his march he found himself pressed by suitors in form, each of whom had something of the gravest importance to bring to his majesty's notice. It was plain that ecclesiastical affairs had gone wrong hitherto, and James was solicited to set them right again, with little sagacity, however, in the solicitation.

While the puritans presented their "millenary" petition to his majesty, signed, as they said, by a thousand names,—a great number in that day; the Brownists or Independents did not forget their duty. The exiles addressed themselves to the task of enlightening the successor of their persecutor, respecting their particular views, which they did under the following heads:

1. "That Christ the Lord hath by his last testament given to his church, and set therein, sufficient ordinary offices, with the manner of calling or entrance, works and maintenance, for the administration of his holy things, and for the sufficient ordinary instruction, guidance, and service of his church, to the end of the world.

2. "That every particular church hath like and full interest and power to enjoy and practise all the ordinances of Christ, given by him to his church, to be observed therein perpetually.

3. "That every true visible church is a company of people called and separated from the world by the

word of God, and joined together by voluntary profession of the faith of Christ, in the fellowship of the gospel.

4. "That discreet, faithful, and able men (though not yet in office of ministry) may be appointed to preach the gospel and whole truth of God; that men, being first brought to knowledge, and converted to the Lord, may be then joined together in holy communion with Christ our head, and one with another.

5. "That being thus joined, every church hath power in Christ, to choose and take unto themselves meet and sufficient persons into the offices and functions of pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, and helpers, as those which Christ hath appointed in his testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of his church.

6. "That the ministers aforesaid being lawfully called by the church where they are to minister, ought to continue in their functions according to God's ordinance, and carefully to feed the flock of Christ committed unto them; being not enjoined or suffered to bear civil offices withal, neither burdened with the execution of civil affairs, as the celebration of marriages, burying the dead, &c.; which things belong to those as well without as within the church.

7. "That the due maintenance of the officers aforesaid should be of the free and voluntary contributions of the church; that, according to Christ's ordinance, they which preach the gospel may live of the gospel, and not by popish lordships and livings, or Jewish tithes and offerings. And that—

8. "Therefore the lands and other like revenues of the prelates and clergy yet remaining (being still also

baits to allure the jesuits and seminaries into the land, and incitements unto them to plot and prosecute their wonted evil courses in hope to enjoy them in time to come) may now by your highness be taken away and converted to better use, as those of the abbeys and nunneries have been heretofore by your majesty's worthy predecessors, to the honour of God, and great good of the realm.

9. "That all particular churches ought to be so constituted, as, having their own peculiar officers, the whole body of every church may meet together in one place, and jointly perform their duties to God, and one towards another.

10. "And that the censures of admonition and excommunication be in due manner executed for sin convicted and obstinately stood in. This power to be also in the body of the church whereof the parties so offending and persisting are members.

11. "That the church be not governed by popish canons, courts, classes, customs, or any human inventions, but by the laws and rules which Christ hath appointed in his testament. That no apocryphal writings, but only the canonical scriptures, be used in the church. And that the Lord be worshipped and called upon in spirit and in truth, according to that form of prayer given by the Lord Jesus, Matt. vi., and after the liturgy of his own testament; not by any other framed or imposed by men, much less by one translated from the popish liturgy, as the book of common prayer."

In the original document, which consisted of forty large pages, all these propositions are expanded and supported in a most lucid and admirable manner.

Whether the king ever took the trouble to read the whole has not been ascertained.

As a specimen of the ability with which these propositions were supported, we adduce the particular reasons in "declaration and proof" of the first, in the words of the document itself, and with all the scripture references.

1. "Because the very office of Christ's mediation, to be the eternal Prophet, Priest, and King of the church, and his faithful dispensation thereof, importeth, requireth, and assureth this of him. Heb. iii. 1—3.; x. 21; xii. 24—28; John xiv. 6; xv. 15, 16; with Acts i. 3.

2. "Because otherwise it would follow, either that Christ hath not in his Testament so provided (the thing being not needful, or Himself not careful, faithful, or sufficient, so to give and appoint), or that men may abrogate his Testament, or super-ordain thereunto: which is contrary to the scriptures aforesaid, compared with Gal. iii. 15.

3. "Else, Moses, being but a servant, was more faithful in the house of God, than Christ the Son. contrary to Heb. iii. 1—6, with Exod. xxxix. 42, 43.

4. "Because the Scripture doth teach that Christ hath given to his church, and set in it, certain and distinct offices, gifts, and works, for his ministry, and building up of his church, until we all meet in the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, etc. Eph. iv. 11—13; 1 Cor. xii. 4—6, 28, 29; with Rom. xii. 7, 8; 1 Tim. chs. iii. and v. 3, 9, 17; vi. 13, 14.

5. "Else, it should be in the power of man to add or take any members to and from the body of

Christ; for the church is his body, and the officers the members thereof: which were contrary to 1 Cor. xii. 18, 27, 28, with Rom. xii. 4—8.

7. "Else there might be church-offices and functions from the earth; and not from heaven only, as Christ hath taught, and even the Pharisees themselves acknowledged. Matt. xxi. 25; John i. 21—27; Heb. v. 4.

8. "Else, the church either is not the kingdom and house of the Lord, or he hath not had that sovreignty and care that all wise princes and householders have for their kingdoms and houses, to have them ordered by officers and ordinances appointed by themselves, and by others: contrary to Acts x. 3; with 1 Tim. iii. 15; vi. 14, 15; Heb. iii. 5, 6; xii. 28.

9. "How else did the apostle Paul, who was not with the other apostles, but did afterward receive the gospel by revelation from Christ; how else did he plant the churches that were gathered by him, in the same way, offices, and ordinances, that the other apostles did; if the Lord himself have not so ordained, or if these ordinances were not part of the gospel which he received? For which see and compare his epistles, and Acts, with the rest.

10. "Else, we could not of faith, either receive, use, or join unto the offices and administration of holy things in the church: because true faith is, and must be, grounded in the Word of God. Rom. x. 17; xiv. 23; Heb. xi. 6; John ii. 22."

Besides the above, which was the third address* to

* The earliest application to James was entitled "The humble petition of certain poor Christians, your Majesty's loyal subjects;"

the monarch emanating from the Independent party, and subscribed as the representative petition of the exiles abroad and their brethren at home, was one which merits special attention. We refer to a publication by Henry Jacob, dedicated to the king, and setting forth the views which he had recently acquired, mainly through the instrumentality of Francis Johnson. It was entitled, "Reasons taken out of God's word and the best human testimonies: proving a necessity of reforming our churches in England." * This treatise proposed to establish four propositions, which in substance are as follows:—First, that it is necessary to reform the churches of England; second, that for the space of two hundred years after Christ, there were no diocesan churches, but only such as were congregational and capable of meeting in one place; thirdly, that the Scriptures set forth a form of church government of an ordinary character, distinct from that of apostles and inspired men; and fourthly, that this form of church government is of perpetual obligation, and may not be exchanged for another.

In defending these positions, Jacob relies wholly upon the exclusive authority of the Scriptures—the "written word being the sole warrant for all things ecclesiastical."

the second, "The humble supplication of sundry your majesty's faithful subjects, who have now a long time been constrained either to live as exiles abroad, or to endure other grievous persecutions at home, for bearing witness to the truth of Christ against the corruptions of Antichrist yet remaining."

* Hanbury, i. 220, note *e*, mentions some previous publications of Jacob's, in which he complains of the bitterness and rage of Bishop Bilson against him.

In opposition to the common notions entertained by churchmen and others, he argues for the completeness of every local or congregational church for all purposes of self-government and management. "It is to be noticed," he says, "that in the estimation of men, a visible church (that is, which is endued with power of spiritual outward government) is of divers forms and natures. Nevertheless, in truth and in very deed, Christ hath ordained for us only one kind of a visible church in his word, and this only ought to be allowed and believed to be a true church by all Christians, for who is it that can or ever could make any society of people to be a visible church, but Christ only? Some men esteem the universal number of professed Christians in the world to be one visible church, calling it the catholic or universal visible church. And the catholics, taking hold thereof, do conclude that likewise there is and ought to be one catholic and universal government ecclesiastical, unto which all other churches, and their governments must be subordinate. But in God's word there is no such visible church nor government any where to be found. This is merely devised by the wit and will of men. Again, men esteem a whole nation professing the gospel to be one visible church, and they call it a *national* church, likewise a province a *provincial* church, and a diocese a *diocesan* church. But none of these likewise can be found in the whole New Testament of Christ. Only a *particular ordinary constant congregation* of Christians in Christ's testament, is appointed and reckoned to be a visible church. And therefore so standeth the case now here with us in England also, and so we ought to esteem it."

The following conclusions are deduced from the general reasonings employed:—1. That every particular ordinary congregation of faithful people is a true and proper visible church. 2. That every such congregation is endued with power from Christ to govern itself ecclesiastically or spiritually. 3. That every true and proper visible church is but one constant and ordinary congregation of faithful men only.*

In every period, congregational principles have been thought more favourable to popular power than to monarchical rule and government. Mr. Jacobs puts this matter in a clear and striking light, and successfully vindicates his views from all false charges of this nature, in the following remarks, which at that period were somewhat original in their character:—

"First," he says, "we absolutely deny that any manner of ecclesiastical government requireth the civil government to become conformed to it. This is a most false conceit. The bounds of either government are distinct and clearly severed the one from the other, albeit each doth aid and succour the other. . . . . . But they think this manner of government will become tumultuous and troublesome in the state, and so it will prove hurtful to the prince. I would demand, why think they that the church government (as we desire it) will be troublesome and tumultuous? They will answer, because we require of necessity that elections of ministers, and excommunications, etc., must be *popular*, which cannot but bring with them commonly tumult, and much trouble, if not confusion and peril to many. Whereupon I reply, that this were very true indeed (viz. much trouble and tumult would

* Reasons, etc., 4.

commonly follow, and perhaps peril to divers), if we desired or sought for popular elections of *diocesan bishops*. Such as we read of and find to have been used in many places under Christian princes, from three hundred years after Christ hitherward for a long time. As, for example, at Antioch, Alexandria, Rome, Constantinople, etc. In these and other cities very great stirs, tumults, and confusions, among the people, have risen indeed not seldom times, even in and about such their elections. The ecclesiastical histories are full of examples to this purpose. But such running together of a whole city or diocese, such voice-giving of such multitudes of people, we desire not, neither do we in any way allow it. It was a corrupt remainder indeed of the people's ancient free voice-giving to the election of their *parishional pastors* or *bishops*. For such all ordinary bishops and pastors were primitively in the apostles' days, and such everywhere they were left by them. Every ordinary bishop, then (I say), was only of a parish (as the ancients call it), that is, of one particular congregation only, and no greater. And so their elections were accomplished by the free consent and voice-giving only of the people of each of these particular ordinary congregations, or parishes. Now it is true, indeed, we acknowledge, we allow, and do desire such *elections* and excommunications by the people. Neither is this to be reckoned any *popularity*, which can be either prejudicious to princes, or tumultuous in itself. No, it cannot be an inconvenient order, but most reasonable for any place or people in the world. Namely, seeing we do expressly hold this assertion no otherwise (and we heartily pray that it may be noted), but as it is grounded on four circumstances:—1. In regard that it is (as we are well

assured) a divine order and ordinance instituted for each church by Christ and his apostles. 2. Considering that we allow the people's consent and voice-giving in elections, excommunications, etc., to be done only by the Christian people of one parish, that is, of one particular ordinary congregation only, and by no greater nor larger number of people by any means. 3. Considering that in the manner hereof we hold this only to be necessary and ordinary, that the ecclesiastical guides there (apart from the people), do first by themselves prepare and determine the whole matter, in such sort that the people may not need to do aught afterward, but only consent with them, and freely signify their consent in it. 4. If anywhere it should fall out that this people thus guided, and being so few, will yet presume to be in their church elections, etc., unruly and violent, then the prince's next dwelling *officers of justice* may and ought to make them keep peace and quietness."

While these petitions and remonstrances were being prepared and presented, James was hastening on his own secret plans for the re-establishment of the Anglican church in all its former authority, and with increased intolerance towards all dissenters. For a short time he dissimulated, as he only knew how to dissimulate; but ere long it was evident enough how he intended to act. In consequence of the desire expressed by so many parties that he would confer with them in respect to their ecclesiastical opinions, giving them a fair hearing, and deciding upon their merits accordingly, he issued a proclamation, dated Oct. 24, 1603, which appointed a conference in his presence between the representatives of the church and of the puritans. The same proclamation, however,

affirmed, that the constitution and doctrine of the English church were scriptural and primitive, while its actual condition at that time reflected great credit on those by whom its affairs had been administered. The puritans were censured, and divers threats were held out respecting the punishment of such as should be guilty of "contemptuous behaviour to any authority."

There could be little hope of a conference appointed by such a proclamation as this; and well might Whitgift express his satisfaction at the pleasing turn which "the Solomon of the age"—the royal craftsman—had given to the current of affairs. The bishops had played their part well, and were amply rewarded for their sycophancy. They had only to leave the matter in the hands of his majesty, and their interests would be safe!

On the 14th, 16th, and 18th of January, 1604, the conference was held at Hampton Court. There were present eighteen churchmen, most of them dignitaries of the church, and four puritans. As for the independents, they were either too insignificant or too obstinate to be summoned. We shall not weary our readers with the details of this mock solemnity. It was little more than a royal entertainment, got up for the purpose of displaying the egregious vanity of the monarch, at the expense of the puritans. This conference—which really terminated on the second day—was closed by the following remark to his attendants respecting the nonconformists:—"If this be all that they have to say, I shall make them conform themselves, or I will harry them out of this land, or else do worse." And this ecclesiastical Nimrod was as good as his word. Whitgift was so much surprised into delight with James's behaviour as to

declare, "that undoubtedly his majesty spake by the special assistance of God's spirit;" and Bancroft "upon his knee protested that his heart melted within him with joy, and made haste to acknowledge unto Almighty God the singular mercy we have received at his hands, in giving us such a king, as since Christ's time, the like, he thought, had not been."*

Indeed, this conference was one of the most disgraceful proceedings ever conducted in the name of impartiality, and for the settlement of national religious differences. Sir John Harrington, although greatly opposed to the puritans, gives this account of it in a letter to his wife:—"The bishops came to the king about the petition of the puritans. I was by, and heard much discourse. The king talked much Latin, and disputed with Dr. Reynolds at Hampton; but he rather used upbraidings than arguments, and told the petitioners that they wanted to strip Christ again, and bid them away with their snivellings: moreover, he wished those who would take away the surplice might want linen for their own breech. The bishops seemed much pleased, and said his majesty spoke by the power of inspiration. I wist not what they meant, but the spirit was rather foul-mouthed. There was much discourse about the ring in marriage and the cross in baptism; but, if I guess right, the petitioners against one cross will find another."† And Mr. Hallam observes, "In the accounts that we read of this meeting, we are alternately struck with wonder at the indecent and partial behaviour of the king, and at the abject baseness of the bishops, mixed,

* Barlow's Account of the Hampton Court Conference in the Phœnix, i. 174.

† Nugæ Antiquæ, i. 181.

according to the custom of servile natures, with insolence towards their opponents. It was easy for a monarch and eighteen churchmen to claim the victory, be the merits of the dispute what they might, over abashed and intimidated adversaries."* Instead of being conciliated, the puritans and nonconformists were more aggrieved than ever, and the breach between them and the Establishment was greatly widened. The vain and unprincipled monarch lost the only opportunity which presented itself of healing the religious divisions of the nation, and by his arbitrary conduct on this and future occasions provoked the terrible retribution which afterwards fell on his unhappy family.

Soon after the Hampton Court Conference a proclamation was issued which had for its object an uniformity in the use of the Book of Common Prayer, and which stated the determination of the king to admit of no "innovation in things once settled by mature determination;" and in the same month (March 19th, 1603—4), in his speech in parliament, he spoke of the puritans and nonconformists as "being ever discontented with the present government, impatient to suffer any superiority, and insufferable in any well-governed commonwealth." In the same parliament, the book of canons, containing one hundred and forty-one articles, was presented to the House of Commons. The principal object of these canons was to suppress puritanism of all kinds. Although not confirmed by parliament, they were acted upon ecclesiastically, and the spirit of them animated more or less all the clergy of the Establishment, who

* Constitutional Hist. i. 404.

were required to receive them on their oath. The nature of these canons is such as to evince at once the intolerance and bigotry of the church that adopted them. The following canons especially bore hard upon the independents of that day:—

"Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that the Church of England, by law established under the king's majesty, is not a true and apostolical church, teaching and maintaining the doctrine of the apostles, let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*,* and not restored, but only by the archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of this his wicked error."†

"Whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the apostles' rules in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood, accounting the Christians who are conformable to the doctrines, government, rites, and ceremonies of the Church of England to be profane, and unmeet for them to join with in Christian profession; let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*, etc."‡

But most of the remaining canons were framed in the same spirit and were equally effective instruments of ecclesiastical despotism.

In consequence of these proceedings, both puritans and independents were persecuted anew and with fresh zest. Bancroft proved a worthy successor of Whitgift,§ and hunted down his prey with great perseverance, seconded in his efforts by the bishops and

* By the fact itself.

† Canon iii.

‡ Canon ix.

§ Whitgift died in 1603—4.

leading clergy.* They now saw themselves secure in their various offices, and employed their leisure in retaliating upon those who had given them what they considered so much unnecessary cause for anxiety. The separatists were now compelled to submit to the new decrees; or to leave the country, if they wished to escape a worse fate. Many were imprisoned, and died the victims of oppression and hate, broken in heart, and wasted by penury and solitude. Such as had returned from exile were compelled once more to "banish themselves," taking many others with them.

Before they left, they used all possible means for the purpose of inducing an alteration in the line of policy adopted by the king and his subservients. But it was in vain. The minds of the ruling party in the state were made up. The monarch had given sufficient indications of the disposition which he cherished towards the nonconforming party, and the archbishop was fully bent upon carrying out practically the determination of the royal will—to "harry them out of the land."

* Dr. Rudd, bishop of St. David's, was an exception to the rule. See his speech in behalf of moderation in Pierce's Vindication, p. 158—163.

CHAPTER VII.

JOHN ROBINSON, THE FATHER OF THE MODERN INDEPENDENTS.

AMONGST those who left the country, in consequence of the arbitrary measures of James the First, was one whose name and memory are still cherished with peculiar veneration. His genius, character, learning, and prudence, were such as to give him great influence in his own day; and in every after period he has been regarded as the Father of the Modern Independents. Our history would be incomplete if we did not furnish some particulars respecting the life, and character, and writings, of this truly eminent man.

John Robinson was born in 1575. Little is known of his early history. While his young days were passing fleetly by, important events were transpiring in his own country. While he was yet in his cradle, Drake was circumnavigating the globe. When he was eight years old, the proto-martyrs of Independency, Copping and Thacker, suffered in behalf of that cause of which he was afterwards to become the expounder and representative. The Spanish Armada was destroyed by the prowess of England when he was in his thirteenth year. At the age of eighteen, he came within the operation of the statute of Elizabeth, which compelled all persons to attend upon the public worship of the Church of England. While

Elizabeth was adding to her personal renown and that of her government, and heaping up wrath against a future day;—while Leicester was wearying himself with the most fruitless of all enterprises;—while Essex was signalising himself by his prowess, and bringing down upon himself the evil consequences of his mad ambition;—while Burleigh was devoting himself to the service of the queen, his mistress, whom he too much identified with the nation;—while Bacon, ever great and illustrious, was advancing step by step to the highest offices of state, and rolling away the clouds of a false logic from the fair face of nature;—while Shakspeare, the poet of mankind, was throwing away his temporal reputation at a playhouse, in order to make it lasting after death;—while Raleigh was securing the favour of the queen by his gallantry, and the applause of the people by his liberal views, and introducing new articles of consumption and luxury into the country;—while Whitgift was scouring the country with his bailiffs and constables, in order to discover Puritan disloyalty, Brownist treason, and any other supposed iniquity conceived in the name of religion;—while all these illustrious personages were thus employed, Robinson was growing up to years of thought and responsible action, passing through the various stages of college life, discharging the duties of a clergyman in the Church of England, unlearning the errors in which he had been brought up, discovering the true doctrines of the gospel, and preparing himself for a noble career as a great leader, whose manly sufferings, able writings, and sage counsels, should not merely be confirmatory of the cause of Independency in England, but instrumental to the planting of the tree of liberty on other shores, and to

the laying broad and deep the foundation of a new republic. He did not, at the time, fill so much space in the public eye as some other men; but he was doing as great a work as any—acting the part of a silent but steady reformer, in matters of the highest moment—winning himself a name with posterity on the same page with that of Wyckliffe, Huss, Luther, Calvin, and Milton—and giving new breadth of outline to that church polity, which, as it was originally in apostolic times, so it shall be, ere long, the basis of fellowship and intercommunion among all the churches of Christ.

Robinson was educated at Cambridge; but no particulars respecting this period of his life have reached us. It is evident, from the nature of his writings afterwards, that he must have been a diligent student; since a person so actively engaged as we find him to have been, could not have acquired the scholarship and polish which he evinced in all his works, after he had entered upon the public services of the ministry.

On leaving Cambridge, he settled down as a beneficed clergyman in or near Yarmouth. While thus engaged, he was brought to the knowledge of the truth, and was led to appreciate those principles which were so much "spoken against." It is probable that he entered upon his clerical duties, as many others of that and after times have done, with little seriousness, or, at least, with a very imperfect knowledge of their vital importance in relation to the cause of Christ and of souls. It may be inferred, however, from his own statement, that he was possessed of a tender conscience; and was led to examine, with all candour and impartiality, the various publications which espoused the cause of evangelical truth and godliness.

It is also worthy of notice that, for many years before he avowed himself a separatist, he secretly favoured the principles of the Brownists, and such as adopted and improved upon their views. He was essentially a man of great prudence, and therefore unwilling to abandon the position in which he found himself, until he had thoroughly examined the new views which his own conscience approved. The secret of Robinson's consistency and influence in after life was in a great degree attributable to this habit of his mind. It could never be said of him that he was fickle, and easily moved by novelty either of opinion or practice. At the same time, he was as far as possible removed from the other extreme—that of obstinately resisting all change, however reasonable. He used, in fact, that liberty of private judgment which is the noblest privilege of every Christian, with a wise courage and a serious freedom. To part with such a privilege, nothing on earth could induce him. To exercise it rashly, or without sufficient deliberation, was equally far from his thoughts. Hence the delay which marked his determination to relinquish his connection with "the church as by law established;" hence also the stability which marked his career afterwards. Although it was a settled maxim of his, to preserve a mind open to new accessions of knowledge, as God might direct his people to a further insight into the meaning of his word, yet we find his progress ever onward, and certainly not fluctuating with every wind of doctrine.

Robinson's own words respecting this matter corroborate the statement we have made, and afford a clue to his whole character. "I do indeed confess," he writes, "to the glory of God and my own shame, that a long time before I entered this way I took some

taste of the truth in it, by some treatises published in justification of it, which, the Lord knoweth, were sweet as honey unto my mouth; and the very principal thing which for a time quenched all further appetite in me, was the over-valuation which I made of the learning and holiness of these and the like persons; blushing in myself to have a thought of pressing one hair-breadth before them in this thing, behind whom I knew myself to come so many miles in all other things; yea, and even of late times, when I had entered into a more serious consideration of these things, and, according to the measure of grace received, 'searched the scriptures' whether they were so or not, and by searching found much light of truth; yet was the same so dimmed and over-clouded with the contradictions of these men, and others of the like note, that had not the truth been 'in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones,' I had never broken those bonds of flesh and blood wherein I was so straitly tied, but had suffered the light of God to have been put out, in my own unthankful heart, by other men's darkness. This reverence every man stands bound to give to the graces of God in other men, that in his differences from them he be not suddenly nor easily persuaded; but that being jealous of his own heart, he undertake the examination of things, and so proceed with fear and trembling; and so, having tried 'all things, keep to that which is good.' So shall he neither wrong the graces of God in himself, nor in others. But on the other side, for a man so far to suffer his thoughts to be conjured into the circle of any mortal man's judgment as either to fear to 'try' what is offered to the contrary, in the balance of the sanctuary, or finding it to bear weight, to fear to give sentence on the Lord's

side, yea, though it be against the mighty,—this is to honour men above God, and to advance a throne above the throne of Christ, who is Lord and King for ever." *

Actuated by such motives as these, Robinson at length felt it his duty to leave the establishment. On so doing, he repaired to Norwich, somewhere about the year 1609, in order to associate with such as entertained religious convictions similar to his own. Here for a season he found a home amongst those with whom he could sympathise. Before this, in all probability, he had met a portion of his flock at Yarmouth in private houses, and had followed a more simple and scriptural method of conducting Divine worship and fellowship than that which the church of England prescribed; but he was too often disturbed by opponents in his own neighbourhood, and therefore took the step to which we have just adverted.

There were either at or shortly after this period, two churches formed on congregational principles in Norwich or its neighbourhood. Mr. Smyth was pastor of the one, and Mr. Richard Clyfton of the other. We shall hear more of these parties in a subsequent portion of our history. Robinson, it is thought, must have joined the church previous to this division. For a considerable period, he fulfilled the duties of a private member, and by his amiable temper and consistent demeanour secured the esteem of the whole community. This circumstance is sufficient in itself to show the character of the man. He was as ready to serve in one capacity as another, when duty required it;

* A Justification of Separation from the Church of England. Against Mr. Richard Bernard, his invective, entitled 'The Separatists' Schism.' By John Robinson, 4to. p. 48.

and by demeaning himself with all humility and consistency as a private member, he gave the best proof that he was not incapacitated to rule.* Such was his conduct, that he was "worthily reverenced of all the city for the graces of God in him." †

For a long period, the persecution directed against the separatists had been felt most keenly; and it was determined, if possible, to leave the country, and escape into Holland. The first attempt was made in 1602, and a second in the spring of the following year. Both occurrences have been narrated in the following words:‡—

"Robinson, and a large company, contracted with the master of a ship for a passage to Holland. They were to embark at Boston, in Lincolnshire, on a certain day, and from a point agreed upon. The captain was not punctual. At length, however, the vessel arrived; and, under cover of the night, the men, and women, and children, all reached the ship in safety. But the captain was a villain. He betrayed them to the officers of the port. The passengers and their goods were immediately removed from the vessel to several boats in waiting to receive them. All their property was turned over and examined, and not a little of it rifled. The persons of the men were

* According to Prince, the two churches were one until 1606. In his New England Chronology he says, "1606, Oct. The purely reformed church in the north [-east] of England, by reason of the distance of their habitations, are obliged to assemble in two several places, and become two distinct churches, etc."—Hanbury, i. 459.

† Ainsworth's Answer to Crashaw, p. 246.

‡ The Pilgrim Fathers, in the British Quarterly, No. I. p. 15, 16.

searched, 'even to their shirts;' and the women were treated with indelicacy and rudeness. When these unhappy people reached the town, crowds assembled to gaze upon them, and many mocked and derided them. Nor was their condition improved when brought before the magistrates. Several were bound over to the assizes, and all were committed to prison. Some were released after the confinement of a few weeks, others after a longer period.

"This happened in 1602. In the following spring, Robinson and his friends resolved on making a second attempt of this nature. They made an arrangement for this purpose with a Dutch captain; and their plan now was, that the men should assemble on a large common, between Grimsby and Hull, a place chosen on account of its remoteness from any town; while the women, the children, and the property of these parties, were to be conveyed to that part of the coast in a barque. The men made their way to the place of rendezvous, in small companies, by land. But the barque reached its destination a day before the ship. The swell of the sea was considerable, and as the females were suffering greatly from that cause, the sailors ran the barque into the shelter of a small creek. The next morning the ship arrived, but through some negligence on the part of the seamen, the vessel containing the women, their little ones, and the property, had run aground. The men stood in groups on the shore, and that no time might be lost the captain of the ship sent his boat to convey some of them on board. But by this time so considerable a gathering of people in such a place, and in a manner so unusual, had attracted attention; information had been conveyed to persons of authority in the neighbourhood;

and as the boat which had taken the greater part of the men to the ship was proceeding again towards the shore, the captain saw a large company, armed with swords and muskets, and consisting of horse and foot, advancing towards the point where the barque was still ashore, and where the few remaining men had grouped together. Fearing the consequences of his illicit compact, the captain returned to the ship, hoisted sail, and was speedily at sea. Robinson—honest and able general as he was in every sense—had resolved to be the last to embark. He was a witness, accordingly, of the scene of distress and agony which ensued. The outburst of grief was not to be restrained. Some of the women wept aloud; others felt too deeply, or were too much bewildered, to indulge in utterance of any kind; while the children, partly from seeing what had happened, and partly from a vague impression that something dreadful had come, mingled their sobs and cries in the general lamentation. As the sail of that ship faded away upon the distant waters, the wives felt as if one stroke had reduced them all to widowhood; and every child that had reached the years of consciousness, felt as one who in a moment had become fatherless. But thus dark are the chapters in human affairs in which the good have often to become students, and from which they have commonly had to learn their special lessons. The ship soon encountered foul weather, and after being driven far along the coast of Norway, all hope of saving her being at one time abandoned, she at length safely reached Holland."

It was after this period, or in 1606, that Mr. Smyth, and his church settled in Amsterdam, joining the church under the pastoral care of Francis Johnson. In the

next year Mr. Clyfton, together with a portion of his flock followed, and repaired to the same city, leaving Robinson behind as the pastor of the church, and Mr. William Brewster, "a reverend man, who was afterwards chosen elder." It appears that the motive which induced the parties last mentioned to remain for a season in England was a benevolent one. The difficulties which usually attend the embarkation of numbers were greatly increased by the vindictiveness of "their pursuers;" and Robinson and Brewster thought it their duty to render all the assistance they could to those who were the least capable of making arrangements for their own safety and comfort. They, therefore, "tarried to help the weakest over before them."* They were so far successful in this, that in the course of the next year they also, with the rest of their flock "got over to Holland," after encountering "great dangers in their passage at sea and in their embarkation," and settled in the same place as those who had preceded them.

At Amsterdam, Robinson appears not to have joined the church under the care of Mr. Clyfton; but to have hired a meeting-house, with the permission of the magistrates, where he and those who were brought over by him met as a distinct church for purposes of worship and fellowship on Independent principles. The circumstances of difference which had arisen between Smyth and Clyfton perhaps led to this step; and somewhat later, in order to avoid further contention, he thought it advisable to remove

* Prince's New England Chronology, p. 254. It is supposed by Hanbury that the excommunication of certain citizens "for resorting unto and praying with Mr. Robinson," hastened his departure at last. Memorials, i. 185.

to another locality. Prince has noted this in his New England Chronology, in the following terms:—

"1609. Mr. Robinson's church having stayed at Amsterdam about a year, seeing Mr. Smyth and his company were fallen into contention with the church that was there before him, and that the flames thereof were like to break out in that ancient church itself—as afterwards lamentably came to pass—which Mr. Robinson and his church prudently foreseeing, they think it best to remove in time, before they were any way engaged in the same; though they knew it would be very much to the prejudice of their outward interest, as it proved to be; yet valuing peace and spiritual comfort above other riches, they therefore with Mr. Robinson, removed to Leyden, about the beginning of the twelve years' truce between the Dutch and the Spaniards:* choose Mr. Brewster, assistant to him, in the place of elder, and there live in great love and harmony both among themselves and their neighbour citizens for above eleven years. But the Rev. Mr. Clyfton stays at Amsterdam, and there dies."†

Before Robinson left Amsterdam he employed his pen in composing one of those masterly defences of the principles he espoused, for which he has since been so highly esteemed. It appears th Bishop Hall, then the "poor rector" of Halstead in Essex, addressed an epistle to "Mr. Smith and Mr. Rob, ringleaders of the late separation; at Amsterdam." By this designation, he intended Smyth, to whom we have already referred, and Robinson. The epistle itself is full of the falsest charges and imputa-

* April 9th. † New England Chronology, p. 254.

tions on their character and motives. Robinson thought it his duty to reply to this pamphlet, in order that he might boldly meet his accuser before the public, and at the same time explain the principles by which he had been led to separate from the establishment in England, and repair to Holland. We shall give some extracts from this reply, entitled, "An Answer to a Censorious Epistle."

In the preamble he opens up the subject of discussion, and the cause of it, in the following words:—

"It is a hard thing even for sober-minded men, in cases of controversy, to use, soberly, the advantages of the times; upon which, whilst men are mounted on high, they use to behold such as they oppose too overly, and not without contempt, and so are ofttimes emboldened to roll upon them, as from aloft, very weak and weightless discourses, thinking any slight and slender opposition sufficient to oppress those underlings whom they have, as they suppose, at so great an advantage. Upon this very presumption, it cometh to pass, that this author undertaketh thus solemnly and severely to censure a cause whereof, as appeareth in the sequal of the discourse, he is utterly ignorant: which, had he been but half so careful to have understood as he hath been forward to censure, he would either have been, I doubt not, more equal towards it, or more weighty against it. As this epistle is come to my hands, so I wish the answer of it may come to the hands of him that occasioned it. Entreating the Christian reader, in the name of the Lord, impartially to behold, without either prejudice of cause or respect of person, what is written on both sides, and from the court of a sound conscience to give just judgment."

In reference to the crime of which Hall accused

him—that of separation from the Church of England—he thus expresses himself:—

"The crime here objected is separation, a thing very odious in the eyes of all them from whom it is made, as evermore casting upon them the imputation of evil, whereof all men are impatient. And hence it cometh to pass that the church of England can better brook the vilest persons continuing communion with it, than any whomsoever separating from it, though upon never so just and well grounded reasons. And yet separation from the world, and so from the men of the world, and so from the prince of the world that reigneth in them, and so from whatever is contrary to God, is the first step to our communion with God, and angels, and good men, as the first step to a ladder is to leave the earth!

"The separation we have made, in respect to our knowledge and obedience, is, indeed, 'late' and new; yet is it in the nature and cause thereof, as ancient as the gospel, which was first founded in the enmity which God himself put betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; which enmity hath not only been successfully continued, but also visibly manifested by the actual separation of all true churches from the world, in their collection and constitution, before the law, and under the law, and under the gospel. Which separation the church of England neither hath made nor doth make, but stands actually one with all that part of the world within the kingdom, without separation; for which cause, amongst others, we have chosen, by the grace of God, rather to separate ourselves to the Lord from it, than with it from Him; in the visible constitution of it."

Thus nobly does he vindicate himself, and all who imitate his conduct in similar circumstances.

He now takes up the accusation of his being a ringleader in the following terms:—

"To the title of 'ringleader,' wherewith it pleases this 'pistler to style me, I answer, that if the thing I have be good, it is good and commendable to have been forward in it; if it be evil, let it be reproved by the light of God's word; and that God, to whom I have done that I have done, will, I doubt not, give me both to see and to heal my error, by speedy repentance; if I have fled away on foot, I shall return on horseback. But as I durst never set foot into this way, but upon a most sound and unresistable conviction of conscience by the Word of God, as I was persuaded, so must my retiring be wrought by more solid reasons, from the same Word, than are to be found in a thousand such pretty pamphlets and formal flourishes as this is."

Further on, he notices the charge of deserting a church which had nurtured him, and had thus been to him and many besides a good mother church.

"But, the church of England, say you, is our 'mother,' and so ought not to be avoided. But, say I, we must not so cleave to holy mother church as [that] we neglect our heavenly Father and His commandments; which, we know, in that estate, we could not but transgress; and that, heinously, and against our consciences; not only in want of many Christian ordinances, to which we were most straitly bound, both by God's word and our necessities, but also in our most simple subjection to antichristian enormities, which we are bound to eschew as hell. She is our 'mother;' so may she be, and yet not the Lord's wife! Everv mo-

ther of children is not a wife. 'Ammi and Ruhamah' were bidden to plead with their mother, apostate Israel; and plead that she was not the Lord's wife, nor he her husband. And though you forbid us a thousand times, yet must we plead. Not to excuse our fault, but to justify our innocency; and that not only, nor so much, in respect of ourselves, as of the truth, which, without sacrilege, we may not suffer to be condemned unheard. And if you yet hear her not, rather blame yourselves as deaf than as dumb. Is not Babylon the mother of God's people; whom He, therefore, commandeth to depart out of her, lest, being partakers of her sins, they also partake of her plagues? And, to conclude, what say you more against us, for your mother, the church of England, than the papists do for their mother, and your mother's mother, the church of Rome, against you, whom they condemn as unnatural bastards and impious matricides, in your separation from her?"

His opinion respecting the worldly character and position of the church of England, is given in the following statement:—

"Your temples, especially your cathedrals and mother churches, stand, still, in their proud majesty, possessed by archbishops and lordbishops, like the flamens and archflamens amongst the Gentiles, from whom they were derived and furnished with all manner of pompous and superstitious monuments; as carved and painted images, massing copes and surplices, chanting and organ music, and many other glorious ornaments of the Romish harlot, by which her majesty is commended to and admired by the vulgar; so far are you in these respects from being gone, or fled, yea, or crept either, out of Babylon! Now, if you be thus

Babylonish where you repute yourselves most Sion-like, and thus confounded in your own evidence; what defence could you make in the things whereof an adversary would challenge you? If your light be darkness, how great is your darkness!"

In the next extract, we discern the difference between the independents and puritans. Robinson left the church of England for other reasons than those of her unscriptural ceremonials, although these were bad enough, and he thinks Hall ought to know it.

"On what ground separation, or ceremonies was objected: But for that, not the separation, but the cause, makes the schismatic; and lest you should seem to speak evil of the thing you know not, and to condemn a cause unheard, you lay down, in the next place, the supposed cause of our separation; against which, you deal as insufficiently and that you pretend to be none other than your consorting with the papists in certain ceremonies, touching which, and our separation in regard of them, thus you write. Master Hall, if you have taken but the least knowledge of the grounds of our judgment and practice, how dare you thus abuse both us and the reader, as if the only or chief ground of our separation were your popish ceremonies? But if you go only by guess, having never so much as read over our treatise, published in our defence, and yet stick not to pass this your censorious doom, both upon us and it; I leave it to the reader to judge, whether you have been more lavish of your censure or credit! Most unjust is the censure of a cause unknown; though, in itself, never so blameworthy; which, nevertheless, may be praiseworthy, for aught he knows that censures it."

In the following passage, Robinson shows that he

knows how to distinguish between "church and state," and the merely inhabiting a country as strangers in it.

"The nearness of the state and church: We, indeed, have much wickedness in the *city* where we live; you, in the *church*: but, in earnest, do you imagine we account the kingdom of England 'Babylon?' or the city of Amsterdam 'Sion?' It is the Church of England, or state ecclesiastical, which we account Babylon, and from which we withdraw in spiritual communion. But for the commonwealth or kingdom, as we honour it above all the states in the world, so would we thankfully embrace the meanest corner in it, at the extremest conditions of any people in the kingdom. The hellish impieties in the city of Amsterdam do no more prejudice our heavenly communion in the church of Christ, than the frogs, lice, murrain, and other plagues over-spreading Egypt, did the Israelites, when Goshen, the portion of their inheritance, was free; nor than the deluge, wherewith the whole world was covered, did Noah, when he and his family were safe in the ark; nor than 'Satan's throne' did the Church of Pergamos, being established in the same city with it."

The following is severe, but not beyond the truth in respect to the condition of England at that period:—

"The air of the gospel which you draw in is nothing so free and clear as you make show. It is only because you are used to it that makes you so judge. The thick smoke of your *canons*, especially of such as are planted against the Kingdom of Christ, the visible church and the administration of it, do both obscure and poison the air which you all draw in, and wherein you breathe. The plaguy spiritual leprosy of sin

rising up in the foreheads of so many thousands in the church, unshut up, uncovered, infects all, both persons and things, amongst you. The blasting hierarchy suffers no good thing to grow or prosper, but withers all, both bud and branch. The daily sacrifice of the Service Book, which—instead of spiritual prayer sweet as incense—you offer up, morning and evening, smells so strong of the pope's *portuis*, as it makes many hundreds, among yourselves, stop their noses at it; and yet you boast of the 'free and clear air of the gospel' wherein you breathe!"

Hall's boast respecting the reputation of the Church of England is thus met:—

"That 'all Christendom should so magnify' your 'happiness,' as you say, is much; and yet yourselves, and the best amongst you, complain so much, both in word and writing, of your miserable condition under the imperious and superstitious impositions of the prelates; yea, and suffer so much also under them, as at this day you do, for seeking the same church government and ministry which is in use in all other churches, save your own! The truth is, you are best liked where you are worst known. Your next neighbours of Scotland know your bishop's government so well as they rather choose to undergo all the misery of bonds and banishment than to partake with you in your 'happiness' this way: so highly do they 'magnify' and 'applaud' the same! Which choice, I doubt not, other churches also would make, if the same necessity were laid upon them! And for your 'graces,' we despise them not, nor any good thing amongst you, no more than you do such graces and good things as are to be found in the Church of Rome, from which you separate notwithstanding. We have, by

God's mercy, the pure and right use of the good gifts and graces of God in Christ's ordinance, which you want. Neither the Lord's people, nor the holy vessels, could make Babylon Sion; though both the one and the other were captived for a time."

The "answer" thus concludes:—

"The terrible threat you utter against us, 'that even whoredoms and murders shall abide an easier answer than separation,' would certainly fall heavy upon us, if this answer were to be made in your consistory courts, or before any of your ecclesiastical judges; but because we know that, not antichrist, but Christ, shall be our judge, we are bold upon the warrant of his word and testament—which being sealed with his blood, may not be altered—to proclaim to all the world, separation from whatsoever riseth up rebelliously against the sceptre of his kingdom; as we are undoubtedly persuaded the communion, government, ministry, and worship of the church of England do!"

Thus did Robinson shew his ability to cope with his adversaries. His reply was not without good results, and even Smyth and Clyfton would feel that Robinson had not left them without rendering them some good service against a common foe.

While Robinson was at Amsterdam he commenced writing another work which deserves special notice. The ability it displays, and the broad and enlightened views it contains respecting the main points in debate between the independents and others, constitute it one of the best defences and expositions of the principles advocated by the former, ever published to the world. It is full of point, and exhibits a mind capable of the greatest logical discrimination. Regarded in

this light, it develops one of Robinson's peculiar excellencies. He was not only able to see the right way for himself, as many others did, but he had great power in stripping off the disguises in which many of the popular errors of the day concealed themselves. None could detect the lurking fallacy more keenly than he. Few could so easily accomplish the somewhat difficult task of unravelling the web of a complicated and false argumentation, and point out in order the very process by which confusion of thought and sentiment are elaborated. In all that Robinson has written, he betrays the skill of a master in this respect.

The work in question was occasioned by a publication issued from the press by a Mr. Bernard, entitled, "The Separatist's Schism; or, the Brownists." The conduct of this person appears te have been marked by great instability. Although a clergyman of the Church of England, he had at one time separated "a hundred voluntary professors" from the rest of his hearers, in order that they might enjoy all the privileges of congregational fellowship according to the institutions of apostolic times. He had even gone so far in his zeal for scriptural principles as to publish a work in defence of nonconformity. Robinson reminds him that he had also sent to him a paper containing his reasons for believing that the bishops of the Church of England were antichristian; and that, although they were not the best reasons that could be adduced, yet they were such as could not be successfully combated, as he very well knew. From some cause, however, he suddenly turned back again,—though not without many compunctions of conscience, according to his own confession,—to his former habits

of conformity. He could not part with his vicarage of Worksop, and so added his name to the list of those who prefer their temporal comfort and reputation to the principles of revealed truth. He is accused by Robinson of saying in his hearing, "Well, I will return home, and preach as I have done; and I must say, as Naaman did, 'The Lord be merciful unto me in this thing.'" Such a man would not be long contented with a silent conformity to a church whose institutions he secretly despised. It is generally the case that such parties seek to bolster up their inconsistency and insincerity by the appearance of great zeal against their former friends. The cry of conscience is stifled by the false and artificial clamour thereby raised, and retribution follows in the shape of a state of feeling that is hardened against the truth. Mr. Bernard, on resolving to return to the bosom of the Church of England, promised his nonconforming friends what he could not perform: namely, that he would never oppose them either by an attack upon their principles, or by endeavouring to prevent others from joining them. The very next sabbath, or "the next but one," he broke his vow, by preaching against both. After this period his zeal grew more and more fierce, until at last it obtained vent in a publication against the separatists, in which they were designated "vipers," "schismatical Brownists," and every thing else a perverted spirit could devise.

Both Smyth and Ainsworth replied, and with great ability, to Bernard's attack upon them. Robinson, however, was not quite satisfied with their performances. His aim was to give a more complete refu-

tation of what had been advanced, examining the particulars one by one, "that so in all points the salve might be answerable to the sore." He entitled his work "A Justification of Separation from the church of England. Against Mr. Richard Bernard, his invective, intituled, 'The Separatists Schism.'" In order that the reader may know how far Robinson understood the principles of Independency, we shall lay before him some of the principal passages of this valuable work.

"For myself," he writes, "as I could much rather have desired to have built up myself, and that poor flock over which the Holy Ghost hath set me, in holy peace,—as becometh the house of God, wherein no sound of axe, or hammer, or other tool of iron, is to be heard,—than thus to enter the lists of contention; so being justly called to contend for the defence of that truth upon which this man, amongst others, lays violent hands, I will endeavour in all good conscience, as before God, so to free the same, as I will be nothing less than contentious in contention, but will count it a victory to be overcome in odious provocations and reproaches, both by him and others. . . . . It were no hard thing for our adversaries to oppress us with the multitude of books; considering both how few and how feeble we are in comparison, besides other outward difficulties; if the truth we hold, which is stronger than all, did not support itself."*

The spirit of Robinson is evinced in such words as these. His entire conduct afterwards was in accordance with the sentiments here expressed. He loved

* Pp. 6, 8.

peace much, but truth more. Hence we find *him*, meek-hearted though he was, amongst the *foremost* controversialists of the day.

Let us now hear his statement respecting the real character of that Independency which he claimed for every congregational church. Bernard had endeavoured to misinterpret the sentiments of the Brownists on this point, as many others have done since. He would have it that Independency was insubordination, and a total exclusion of all official government. Not so, says Robinson; 'we profess the bishops or elders to be the only ordinary governors in the church, as in all other actions of the church's communion, so, also, in the censures. Only *we* may not acknowledge them for 'lords over God's heritage,' 1 Pet. v. 3, as *you* would make them,—'controlling all, but to be controlled by none;' much less essential unto the church, as though it could not be without them; least of all, the church itself, as you would expound, Matt. xviii. But *we* hold the eldership, as other ordinances, given unto the church for her service; and so, the elders or officers, the 'servants and ministers' of the church, 2 Cor. iv. 5; Col. i. 25; the wife, under Christ her husband."*

From this it is evident that Robinson took a correct view of the eldership as being identical with the bishop's office, and intended to answer in a special manner the great purposes of the church's edification. Farther on he opens up his views on the subject more at large. "Wise men," he says, "having written of this subject, have approved as good and lawful, three kinds of polities,—monarchical, where

* Page 8.

supreme authority is in the hands of one; aristocratical, when it is in the hands of some few select persons; and democratical, in the whole body or multitude. And all these three forms have their places in the church of Christ. In respect of Him, the Head, it is a monarchy; in respect of the eldership, an aristocracy; in respect of the body, a popular state.

"Ministers and church-governors have no such authority tied to their office (as civil magistrates have,) but merely to the Word of God. And as the people's *obedience* stands not in making the elders their lords, sovereigns, and judges, but in listening to their godly counsels; in following their wise directions; in receiving their holy instructions, exhortations, consolations, and admonitions; and in using their faithful service and ministry; so neither stands the elder's *government* in erecting any tribunal seat or throne of judgment over the people, but in exhorting, instructing, comforting, and improving them by the Word of God, 1 Tim. iii. 16; and in affording the Lord and them their best service. But here it will be demanded of me, if the elders be not set over the church for her guidance and government? Yes, certainly, as the physician is set over the body, for his skill and faithfulness to minister unto it, to whom the patient, yea, though his lord or master, is to submit;—the lawyer over his cause, to attend unto it;—the steward over his family, even his wife and children, to make provision for them;—yea, the watchmen over the whole city, for the sake of safe keeping thereof. Such, and none other, is the elder's, or bishop's government." *

* Pp. 132, 137.

This we believe to be a scriptural view of the kind of government which bishops or elders should have in the church: a moral and spiritual rule, which is divested of all worldly authority, and totally unconnected with every thing like force. In reply to the theory of the church of England—which makes the people mere passive recipients of the doctrine taught by their ministers,—Robinson adds, "Dare you say, as you have, that the officers are absolutely to the church, as the eyes to the body; and, that there is no spiritual light, in the rest of the members, save only in them; and, that all the body besides, and without them, is darkness? Indeed, such blind beetles, *your* spiritual lords, and you, make your churches; and so you lead them. But, O you, the people of God, yet in Babylon, 'partakers of the heavenly illumination,' trust not these your seers too much. They would be thought all eye, from top to bottom; and would make you believe that you, 'the multitude,' are stone blind, and cannot possibly, without them, see one step before you; that so they might lead you the life whither they list. But open your eyes more and more, and you shall see more and more clearly, that the ways of your national church are not the ways which Christ hath left for his visible churches to walk in, but a very bye-path; and take heed that these men, which would be thought all and only light, cause not a fog of earthly ordinances to rise upon you, and a dark mist to cover you!" *

This was a noble appeal, and still worthy of being echoed and re-echoed throughout the length and breadth of the land. Often, since the period in which

* Page 161.

these words were written, have those "fogs of earthly ordinances" obscured the light of Divine truth in this country; and mainly as the result of yielding too much to the authority of such as hold a merely official place in the churches of Christ.

But other particulars deserve to be noticed. Robinson's views respecting the formation of a Christian church, as depending only on the existence of fitting materials for the purpose, namely, converted persons who may be joined together in holy fellowship, are very different from some that are still entertained by men otherwise enlightened. He has no faith in what is termed, "a historical church;" but great regard for every church based on a spiritual apprehension of the truth. "And for the *gathering of a church*," he writes, "I do tell you, that, in what place soever, by what means soever; whether by preaching the gospel by a true minister, by a false minister, by no minister,—or by reading, conference, or any other means of publishing it,—two or three faithful people do arise, separating themselves from the world into the fellowship of the gospel, and covenant of Abraham, *they* are a church, truly gathered, though never so weak; a house and temple of God, rightly *founded* upon the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, 'Christ himself being the chief corner stone,' against which 'the gates of hell shall not prevail.'" *

This matter is put yet more strongly in the following passage, in which he shows not only how a church may arise without any dependence upon other parties for its existence, but that it may be under the necessity of acting for a time without any officers, edifying it-

* Page 221.

self by an interchange of good offices amongst all the members. "The scriptures record, that after Stephen's death, 'all' the church at Jerusalem was 'dispersed,' save the apostles; and that they which were dispersed, 'went everywhere preaching the word;' the effect of whose preaching amongst the Gentiles was the faith and conversion of 'a great number' unto the Lord. Here were not only church-matters, but even churches begun; 'preaching to and fro;' 'turning and joining of multitudes to the Lord,' and that, where neither apostles, nor other officers, were present; for this is too gross to affirm, that during all the apostles' days, nothing was begun but by them! And what if the Lord should now raise up a company of faithful men and women in Barbary, or America, by the reading of the scriptures, or by the writings, conferences, or sufferings of some godly men, must they not separate themselves from the filthiness of the heathen, to the Lord; nor turn from idols to the true God; nor join themselves unto Him in the 'fellowship' of the gospel; nor have any communion together for their mutual edification and comfort, till some vagabond priest from Rome, or England, be sent unto them, to begin their church matters with his service-book? And yet this would not serve the turn either, for he would be unto them 'a barbarian,' and they barbarians unto him. Some years must be spent before each could understand the other's language. Nay, if this were a true ground, that church-matters might not be begun without officers,—it were impossible that such a people should ever either enjoy officers, or become a church; yea, I may safely add, that ever there should be in the world, after the visible apostacy of antichrist, any true church or officers.

No man takes this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron.' Now, God calls no man ordinarily, but by the church; for I suppose you will not deny but that the choice of officers is a church-matter, and not a matter of the world. And the church must choose none but such as of whose knowledge, zeal, and utterance, they have taken trial of by the exercise of his gifts, as you truly affirm elsewhere; and you will not say, but this exercise of his gifts, after this manner and for this end, is a church-matter. Whence it followeth, that both church-matters, yea, and churches also, may, and in cases must be begun without officers. Yea, even where officers are, if they fail in their duties, the people may enterprise matters needful, howsoever you will have the minister the only *primum movens*,* and will tie all to his fingers." †

All this is incontrovertibly put, and is consistent with the genius of the gospel dispensation. Robinson knew how to discriminate between mere "order" and what is essential to the efficient discharge of Christian duties. In all his reasonings he never once loses sight of the importance of personal Independency on the part of all Christians, Hence the clearness of his views respecting the limits of official authority, and the responsibility attaching to all members of churches, whether they have the advantage of an official superintendence or not. The following passage is worthy of serious consideration by all the members of Christian churches in the present day.

"Christ Jesus, the King and Lord of his church,

* Prime mover. † Page 139.

hath set in it certain sorts and orders of officers, rightly fitted, and furnished with graces, for the reparation of the saints, and edification of his body to the world's end. This we affirm as loud as you, and with more comfort. You, in bringing it, have only lighted a candle, whereby to discover your own nakedness. You would conclude, that therefore no brethren, out of office, may meddle with the reparation and edification of the saints, or church. I do acknowledge that only apostles, prophets, etc., by office, and as works of their ministry, are to look to the reparation and edification of the body; but, that the brethren out of office are discharged of those duties I deny, any more than the rest of the 'servants' were of watching, though out of office, because 'the porter' alone was by office, 'to watch.' Mark xiii. 34, 37. Yea, look what is laid upon the officers in this place, after a more special manner by virtue of their office,—that also is laid upon the rest of the brethren elsewhere, in the same words, to be performed in their places as a duty of love, for which they have not only liberty, but charge from the Lord. The officers are here charged with the reparation or knitting together of the saints; the same duty, in the same words, is imposed upon every 'brother spiritual,' Gal. vi. 1.; and I hope you, the ministers, will not be the only spiritual men in the church. Secondly, the officers are here given to 'edify' the body: the same duty, in the same terms, is laid upon every one of the 'brethren' in their places, 1 Thess. v. 11.; and unto these few might be added a hundred places of the same nature. Why, then, should the ministers of the Lord, or any other for their sake, *envy* 'the Lord's people' either their graces or their liberty; or thus arrogate all unto

themselves, as though all knowledge were treasured up in their breasts, all power given into their hands, and as though no drop of grace, for edification or comfort of the church, could fall from elsewhere than from their 'lips.' Moses wished that 'all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them;' and Paul gives liberty to 'the whole church,' and to 'all' in it, women excepted, to 'prophecy one by one,' for the instruction, edification, and comfort of all. But with Mr. Bernard and his church, I perceive neither Moses' prayer, nor Paul's grant, nor God's Spirit, must be available, or find acceptance for edification by any save the ministers. The subjects of kings used to complain of monopolies, but the subjects of the Lord Jesus have greater cause of complaint; that He, himself, his presence, power, and graces, wherewith he honoureth 'all' his saints, are thus monopolized and engrossed." *

Again, in another place, he adds, "In the church, all and every ordinance concerns every person, as a part of their communion,—without the dispensation of necessity—for their use and edification; all the officers to be chosen by suffrages and consent of the 'multitude.' The brethren are to admonish their brethren of every violation of God's commandment; and so, in order, to 'tell the church,' and to see the parties reformed; to observe and to take notice of the officers' carriage and ministration; and to 'say to Archippus,' as there is need, 'Take heed to thy ministry, that thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it;' and if the ministers will deal corruptly, and

* Page 158.

so persevere in the spirit of profaneness, heresy, idolatry, or atheism, to censure, depose, reject, or avoid them. Otherwise, they betray their own souls and salvation." *

After this, we are not surprised to hear Robinson assert the church's right and duty to choose its own officers, in the following terms:—

"The bond between the minister and people, is the most strait and near bond that may be; and, therefore, not to be entered but with mutual consent. It makes much, both for the provocation of the minister unto all diligence and faithfulness; and also for his comforts in all the trials and temptations which befall him in his ministry, when he considereth how the people unto whom he ministereth have committed that rich treasure of their souls, in the Lord—yea, I may say, of their very 'faith' and 'joy,' to be *helped* forward unto salvation—to his care and charge, by their free and voluntary choice of him. It much furthers the love of the people to the person of their minister, and so, consequently, their obedience unto his doctrine and government, when he is such a one as *themselves*, in duty unto God and love of their own salvation, *have made choice of;* as, on the contrary, it leaves them without excuse, if they either perfidiously forsake or unprofitably use such a man's holy service and ministration. Lastly, it is agreeable to all equity and reason that all free persons and estates should choose their own servants, and them unto whom they give wages, and maintenance for their labour and service. But so it is betwixt the people and ministers; the people a free people, and the church a free estate

* Page 165.

spiritual, under Christ the King; the ministers, the church's, as Christ's, servants;' and so by the church's provision to 'live,' and of her, as 'labourers,' to receive wages."*

On the subject of "ordination," Robinson's views are clear and discriminating. He knows how to value it on the ground of order, and how to estimate aright that false value which is attached to it by the church of England. "We acknowledged," he says, "that in the right and *orderly* state of things, no ministers are to be ordained but by ministers, the latter by the former, in the churches where they are, and one which the Holy Ghost hath set them." Further on he adds, "The prelates, and those which level by their line, do highly advance ordination, and far above the administration of the word, sacraments, and prayer; making it and the power of excommunication, the two incommunicable prerogatives of a *bishop*, in their understanding, above an ordinary minister. But surely herein these chief ministers do not succeed the chief ministers, the apostles, except as darkness succeeds light; and antichrist's confusion, Christ's order. When the apostles were sent out by Christ, there was no mention of ordination; their charge was to 'go, teach all nations, and baptize them;' and that the apostles accounted preaching their principal work, and after it baptism and prayer, the scriptures manifest. And if ordination had been, in those days, so prime a work, surely Paul would rather have tarried in Crete himself, to have ordained elders there, and have sent Titus, an inferior officer, about that inferior work of preaching, than have gone himself about that, leaving Titus for the other."†

* Page 375. † Page 412.

In selecting the above extracts from this valuable treatise, we have aimed at giving Robinson's views respecting the congregational polity only. Many other matters are touched upon which we have omitted. It is right, however, that two additional passages should be adduced; the one illustrative of the light in which he regarded the sanction and patronage of the state in matters of a religious nature; and the other pertaining to the divisions which sprang up amongst the Independents themselves, and which were frequently urged as an objection to their peculiar church polity. The first is as follows:—

"I doubt not but Mr. Bernard, and a thousand more ministers in the land,—were they secure of the magistrate's sword, and might they go on with his good licence,—would wholly shake off their canonical obedience to their ordinaries, and neglect their citations and censures, and refuse to sue in their courts, for all 'the peace of the church' which they commend to us for so sacred a thing! Could they but obtain license from the magistrate to use the 'liberty' which they are persuaded Christ hath given them, they would soon shake off the prelate's yoke, and draw no longer under the same, in spiritual communion with all the profane in the land; but would break those bonds of iniquity, as easily as Samson did the cords wherewith Dalilah tied him, and give good reasons also, from the Word of God, for their so doing. And yet the approbation of men and angels makes the ways of God and works of religion never a whit the more lawful, but only the more free from bodily danger. Whereupon we, the weakest of all others have been persuaded to embrace this truth of our

Lord Jesus Christ, though in great and manifold afflictions, and to hold out his testimony as we do, though without approbation of our sovereign, knowing that as his approbation, in such points of God's worship as his Word warranteth not, cannot make them lawful; so neither can his disallowance make unlawful such duties of religion as the Word of God approveth; nor can he give dispensation to any person to forbear the same." *

The other passage respecting the dissensions alleged to have sprung up amongst the Brownists, refers to parallel cases in other churches, both in ancient and later times, and argues thence that the objection is invalid as advanced against the separatists. "But I take," he says, "no delight in writing these things; neither do I think the needless dissensions which have been amongst us, the less evil because they are so common to us with others; but these things I have laid down, to make it appear that Mr. Bernard here useth none other weapon against us than Jews and pagans might have done against Christians, and papists against such as held the truth against them; yea, and than atheists . . might take up against all the professions and religions in the world. . . Touching the 'heavy sentence' of excommunication, by which 'the father and brother were delivered up to the devil,' as Mr. Bernard speaketh, I desire the reader to consider . . the Church of England is in heavy case, which plays with excommunications as children do with rattles. And, to allude to the word Mr. Bernard useth, in what a 'devilish' case are either the prelates and convocation-house which have, *ipso facto*, excommunicated all that speak or deal against their

* Page 14.

state, ceremonies, and service-book, since the curse causeless falls upon the head of him from whom it comes; or the Reformists, whereof Mr. Bernard would be one by fits, and such as seek for and enterprize reformation?" *

Such are the principal features of Robinson's treatise.

It remains to be noticed, that in one part of it he ventures on a prophecy respecting the future advancement of Christ's cause in connexion with the Independent order of church organization, which came to be realized. "Let it be," he says, "as Mr. Bernard would have it, that the cause of religion is to be measured by the multitude of them that profess it, yet must it further be considered, that religion is not always sown and reaped in one age. 'One soweth and another reapeth,' John iv. 37. . . The many that are already gathered, by the mercy of God, into the kingdom of his Son Jesus, and the nearness of many more through the whole land, for 'the regions are white unto the harvest,' do promise *within less than a hundred years*, if our sins and theirs make not us and them unworthy of this mercy, a very plenteous harvest!" †

Although this work was commenced at Amsterdam, it was not published until 1610, a year or so after Robinson had settled at Leyden. It devolves upon us now to notice the condition of the church under his care, and the influence which he exerted on his adopted town from this period.

It appears that the removal from Amsterdam was a wise step, and attended with happy results. According to the statement quoted a little way back, great

* Page 56. † Page 62.

love and harmony prevailed, not only amongst the members of the church, but between them and their neighbours. Both Robinson and Brewster were highly esteemed by the clergy and leading persons of the town. No disputes occurred that in any way reflected on the Christian character and principles of the Independents. And it was thus proved, that the laws of Christ, as developed in the apostolic institutions of the New Testament, are capable of being acted upon universally, wherever there is the cultivation of genuine piety and a Christian spirit.

From time to time, various parties "from divers parts of England" joined the Congregational church at Leyden, until they became somewhat numerous. The author of the New England Chronology says, that "they grew a great congregation." It is probable, however, that they never exceeded two or three hundred. Whatever might be the accessions to the church, we do not find that any had the disposition to disturb the peace of the little community. Under the joint care of two ministers so highly esteemed, and by whom the principles pertaining to Christian fellowship and charity were so faithfully and scripturally expounded, all was prosperity and peace. It is probable that the greater part of those who joined them came from the eastern counties of England, where the principles of Brownism had most widely spread; and hence were prepared to fall in with all the peculiarities of the system advocated by the Independents of Leyden.

A proof of the high esteem in which Robinson's talents were held by the most eminent of his fellow-townsmen, is furnished by the circumstance of his being put forward by them, somewhat against his

will, as the advocate of evangelical truth, in a time of public excitement, occasioned by doctrinal controversy. In 1812, the university of Leyden was divided, in the person of two of its professors, on the subject of grace and free-will. Episcopius advocated the Arminian scheme, and Polyander the Calvinistic. Such was the contention that all parties were more or less involved in the dispute, and great bitterness of feeling was occasioned. The favourers of the one professor would scarcely give a hearing to the other, and thus the controversy was likely to be indefinitely prolonged. Robinson was not uninterested in these proceedings. As a lover of truth he was above all party feelings; and although fully occupied by his public duties, both of the pulpit and of the press, made a point of hearing both sides. "Whereby," says Prince, "he is well-grounded in the controversy; sees the force of all their arguments; knows the shifts of the Arminians; and, being himself otherwise very able, none is fitter to engage them, as appears by sundry disputes, so as he begins to be terrible to the Arminian party." * In the course of the following year Episcopius published some theses, which he avowed himself willing to defend against all opposers. Polyander and the "chief preachers of the city" were alarmed by this bold challenge, feeling themselves unequal to the task of meeting so subtle an adversary. But they had the merit of not thinking of themselves "more highly than they ought to think," and were the last to rest the truth of their principles on their own ability to espouse them against a powerful debater. In these circumstances

* New England Chronology.

they applied to Robinson, convinced that he was fully equal to the task from which they shrank. Robinson was not wanting in self-confidence, although a man of great meekness and prudence, and felt himself quite prepared to engage in the controversy. But, as a stranger in the town, he was reluctant to comply with the request. To this they replied, that the truth was in danger, and was likely to suffer, if he did not come forth in its defence, accepting the challege, and meeting Episcopius in public. After much solicitation Robinson yielded, and engaged in the controversy on two or three occasions, with success. "When the day comes," says the authority before referred to, "he so defends the truth, and foils the opposer, as he puts him to an apparent *nonplus* in this great and public audience. The same he does a second or third time, upon the like occasions; which as it causes many to give praise to God that the truth had so famous a victory, so it procures Mr. Robinson much respect and honour from those learned men and others: and it is said by some of no mean note, that were it not for giving offence to the State of England, they would prefer him, if he pleased, and allow his people some public favour." *

While this controversy was pending at Leyden, other controversies of a different kind were dividing the infant cause at Amsterdam. These originated with various parties, and were conducted on different grounds.

The first was occasioned by Mr. Smyth, to whom a reference has already been made. "His theological sentiments," says Dr. Price, "which were very similar to those espoused by Arminius, became the occasion

* Ibid.

of unhappy collision with his brethren. But his views on the subject of baptism were still more obnoxious, and awakened an angry and fierce controversy, in which the sacredness of character and the charity of the gospel were alike disregarded." * It is not our intention to enter into the peculiar merits of this controversy, any further than is needful in order to the purpose of our history. Whether the views of the anti-pædo baptists are right or wrong, does not concern us in relation to the principles of Independency. If, however, the views of Mr. Smyth were such as he has stated, it is evident that there was no alternative but that of his separating himself from the church at Amsterdam, or being separated by them.† "Be it

* Hist. of Nonconformity, i. 495. Dr. Price adds in a note, "Mr. Smith's enemies charged him with various singular notions; as, that it was unlawful to read the Scriptures in public worship; that no translation of the Bible was the Word of God; that singing the praises of God was unlawful, etc. The quarter whence these charges emanate involves them in suspicion." In making these last statements the author seems to depart from his usual course of impartiality. In respect to the first two charges, they are made good by Smyth's own words. Hanbury, i. 180, 181. And as to the last, it is admitted by Ivimey, in his Hist. of the Baptists, vol. ii. p. 374, that "the prejudices against singing were general among the baptists."

† Dr. Price endeavours to make it appear that Smyth's expulsion from the Brownist church, "cannot be justified without an admission of the principle on which religious persecution is based;" and that "the right which it assumed involved, though in a more subtle form, the same spirit as had reigned in the councils of Whitgift and Bancroft," i. 496. This appears to us very unjust, admitting, as we do, that differences of opinion on minor points are perfectly consistent with the fellowship of the saints, we still ask, whether that can be termed a "minor point" which unchurches a Christian people? How could Smyth with any consistency wish to be retained by a church which he declared "to be

known," he writes, "to all the separation, that we account them, in respect of their constitution, to be as very a harlot as either her mother England or her grandmother Rome is, out of whose loins she came; and although once in our ignorance we have acknowledged her a true church, yet now, being better informed, we revoke that our erroneous judgment, and protest against her, as well for her false constitution as for her false ministry, worship, and government. The true constitution of the church is of a new creature baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the false constitution is of infants baptized. We profess, therefore, that all those churches that baptize infants are of the same false constitution; and all those churches that baptize the new creature, those that are made disciples by teaching men, confessing their faith and their sins, are of one true constitution; and therefore the church of the separation, being of the same constitution with England and Rome, is a most unnatural daughter to her mother England and her grandmother Rome, who, being of the self-same genealogy and generation, dare, notwithstanding, most impudently wipe her own mouth, and call her mother and grandmother adulteresses. Herein, therefore, we do acknowledge our error, that we, retaining the baptism of England which gave us our constitution, did

as very a harlot as either her mother England or her grandmother Rome?" So long as pædo-baptists and anti-pædo-baptists regard baptism as a rite respecting which a difference of opinion may exist without affecting their church constitution, they may remain together in the same church fellowship. But when either the one or the other party make their mode of administering the rite a thing *essential* to church constitution, as Smyth did, there can be fellowship in the same church no longer.

call our mother England a harlot, and, upon a false ground, made our separation from her; for although it be necessary that we separate from England, yet no man can separate from England as from a false church, except he also do separate from the baptism of England, which giveth England her constitution; and whosoever doth retain the baptism of England, doth withal retain the constitution of England, and cannot, without sin, call England a harlot, as we have done; and this we desire may be well minded of all that separate from England; for, if they retain the baptism of England, viz., the baptism of infants as true baptism, they cannot separate from England as from a false church, though they may separate from corruption; and whosoever doth separate from England as from a false church, must needs separate from the baptism of England as from false baptism. For the baptism of England cannot be true and to be retained, and the Church of England false, and to be rejected; neither can the Church of England possibly be false except the baptism be false, unless a true constitution could be in a false church. Therefore, the separation must either go back to England, or go forward to true baptism. And all that shall in time to come separate from England, must separate from the baptism of England; and if they will not separate from the baptism of England, there is no reason why they should separate from England as from a false church." *

It is not surprising, that with such views as these,

* The character of the Beast, or the False Constitution of the Church Discovered, etc. Epistle to the Reader, i. 3.

—views that completely unchurched the congregation of believers, of which Smyth formed a part,—there should be a separation between Smyth and the rest. The fault lay, not with the church, but with the party whose principles of necessity excluded him from all church communion with them. The only course open to him was, either to win the church over to his views, or to set up a church of his own. Not being able to accomplish the former, he adopted the latter alternative, in conjunction with a Mr. Helwisse, who afterwards became celebrated as the founder of the first Baptist church in London. But now a difficulty arose, respecting the commencement of a church, whose very basis should be baptism. The baptism of the Church of England was invalid; and for one of them to baptise the other, would be for an unbaptised person, having no church standing, to perform functions pertaining to the church. Mr. Smyth, to avoid this dilemma, baptised himself, and was afterwards designated as a se-baptist. In justification of this practice he used the following argument. "If all the commandments of God must be obeyed, then this of baptism, and this warrant is sufficient for assuming baptism. Now, for baptising a man's self, there is as good warrant as for a man's churching himself; for two men, singly, are no church; jointly, they are a church; and they jointly put a church upon themselves; for as both these persons unchurched, yet have power to assume the church, each of them for himself and others in communion, so each of them unbaptised, hath power to assume baptism for himself, with others, in com-

munion."* After he had thus baptised himself, Mr. Smyth baptised Helwisse, and others who had joined them; and thus a baptist church was formed at Amsterdam.

In what light Robinson regarded these and other proceedings, we shall see in another chapter.

* The character of the Beast, etc. p. 58.

END OF VOL. II.

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